

The
PROSE of Our
KING JAMES VERSION

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By M. E. OLSEN, Ph.D.

The P R O S E *of Our*
King James Version

The PROSE of Our King James Version

ITS ORIGIN
AND
COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT

By
M. Ellsworth Olsen, Ph.D.



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M. ELLSWORTH OLSEN.

Foreword

THE APPEARANCE not long ago of the Revised Standard New Testament has aroused widespread public interest. Not only are Bible students discussing the pros and cons of the new version, but the whole question of Bible translation is naturally receiving some attention. The new version is rather generally regarded as superior both to the Revised New Testament of 1881 and to the American Standard version of 1901. In the opinion of some it offers a serious challenge to the King James version, which has held the field for more than three hundred years; but it is hardly likely to replace that much-loved classic.

The unique excellence of the King James version is largely due to the fact that it represents the combined labors, spread over a period of nearly ninety years, of successive men and groups of men who had unusual qualifications for the delicate task of making the Hebrew prophets talk English. It was fortunate, too, that the final touches were given at a time when the English language had reached its highest point of efficiency as an instrument for the expression of religious truth.

The opinion held by some that Tyndale fixed the style of the King James version, and other members of the various groups of translators merely followed his

lead, not only is contrary to what should be well-known facts, but utterly fails to account for the singular beauty of the version, which during more than three centuries has retained the love and veneration of millions of Bible readers.

It is the purpose of this volume to trace from its early beginnings the history of English Bible translation, and indicate clearly the successive steps in the development of the sacred dialect, which has come to be known as Biblical prose. As this history is followed, it will be seen that although Tyndale was first in the field as a translator from the original Greek, there were other highly gifted men who worked long and faithfully to the end that Englishmen might have the inspired Book in the best possible literary form. Like other great achievements, the prose of our English Bible, with its choice diction and attractive rhythms, has a history with beginnings that reach back into the fourteenth century, and it was never held in higher esteem than it is today. If and when it does at length retire from the field, it is likely to be replaced by a version so much like itself that it will be difficult to distinguish one from the other, except in those rarely found passages where the older version is seriously at fault.

Meanwhile, let us give due praise to the new Revised Standard version for its excellent scholarship, and also for preserving intact for us so many fine passages from the King James version.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

It [the Bible] is a book literally above praise: there is a kind of impertinence in praising it. The best praise we can render it is to use it; to read, and practice, and read again. It was written for our learning: let us take care that it finds us teachable, willing to learn, possessed with a deep feeling of needing its help. And how is it that it is able to give us such help? For two reasons: because it is, above all other books, the book of man, and because it is the book of God. It is the book of man, not only because it was written by men, but because it is full of the deepest thoughts, longings, desires, struggles, victories of men, their best work done on the earth, their most passionate cries to the heaven above. It is the book of God, because in it we hear what He spoke to other ages, and through every part of it He speaks to us now, telling us what He has done for men in the days of old, what He has done for all mankind in all times, what He is doing for us now; pointing out the way to Himself, encouraging us to enter on that way, warning us of the dangers which beset us by the way, giving us gleams of light from above to cheer us and guide us on the way.—FENTON JOHN ANTHONY HORT, *Sermons on the Books of the Bible* (selected from the volume of *Village Sermons*), p. 7.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

THE PROSE OF OUR English Bible is widely regarded as a literary achievement of unique beauty and excellence. It has been said to touch high-water mark in the history of the language. It is, according to the late Prof. J. H. Gardiner, of Harvard University, the apex of our literary arch, the ultimate standard for all time of English prose style.

Many are the tributes which have been paid to the Authorized version, none perhaps more eloquent than that of Frederick William Faber, who said of its English: "It lives on in the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities seem often to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of the national seriousness. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representation of his best moments, and all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and peni-

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tent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible.”¹

John Richard Green, in his *History of the English People*, after dwelling at length on the importance of the Bible as a formative power in English literature, sums up the matter in these words: “As a mere literary monument the English Version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue, while its perpetual use made it, from the instant of its appearance, the standard of our language.”²

The late Prof. George Saintsbury, of Edinburgh University, dealing with the same subject, praises “the company of scholarly divines who produced—what is probably the greatest prose work in any language—the Authorized Version of the Bible in English.”³ He goes on to say: “The plays of Shakespeare and the English Bible are, and will ever be, the twin monuments not merely of their own period, but of the perfection of English, the complete expressions of the literary capacities of the language, at the time when it had lost none of its pristine vigor, and had put on enough but not too much of the adornments and the limitations of what may be called literary civilization.”⁴

It is a little strange that a body of prose so uniformly

¹ James Mudge, *Faber: A Sketch of His Life Together With Selections From His Devotional Works in Prose and Poetry*, pp. 233. 234.

² Volume 2, p. 3.

³ *A History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 215.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

admired should have attracted so little critical attention. There are numerous excellent works dealing with the external history of the English Bible, but there are none dealing at all fully with the origin and development of its prose style. This is the more remarkable inasmuch as there are abundant materials for such study. Not only do we know fairly well the main facts in the history of England during the two and a half centuries covered by the successive translations, but we have the translations themselves, in which can be traced the development of the style. This rich store of materials, which affords the natural means of arriving at a correct understanding of Biblical prose, has been practically unused.

So far as it has been discovered, Prof. J. H. Gardiner was the first person to treat with any degree of fullness the question of the origin of Biblical prose. His views are contained in two articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*,⁶ and in a book of no little interest and value entitled *The Bible as English Literature*. His treatment of the subject might be said to be good, as far as it goes. The difficulty is that it does not go far enough. He had evidently made a sympathetic study of the character of William Tyndale, the translator who by many is considered to be chiefly responsible for the style of the Authorized version. He recognized in Tyndale some of the qualities which might be expected in the originator of

⁶ "The Father of English Prose Style," vol. 85, pp. 684-692; "On Improving the Style of the English Bible," vol. 94, pp. 683-692.

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such a style as is found in the English Bible. As he put it, "His [Tyndale's] own purpose and character were so noble and devoted that they help to explain the splendid style of his translation."^{*} He thought he was able to find a certain resemblance to Biblical style in Tyndale's personal letters. These considerations, and the added fact that in passages of simple narrative the wording of our present New Testament is more than four-fifths that of Tyndale, led Mr. Gardiner to the conclusion that this first translator of the sixteenth century fixed the style of the English Bible.

It will hardly be necessary to give lengthy quotations; one or two passages will bring his position fairly before the reader: "His [Tyndale's] achievement for English prose style reminds one of the passage in *The Virginians* in which Thackeray, speaking of Washington, points out that in the war which began in the backwoods of America, and spread thence over two continents; which divided Europe: which deprived France of all her American possessions, and in the end England of most of hers,—that in all this great war the man who came out with the highest fame and the most glory was the man who fired the first shot. So in the case of Tindale and the art of writing in English prose: after nearly four centuries and all the action and the reaction of time it is still true that the type of prose style which no good writer can forget, and about which all varieties of prose

^{*}*The Bible as English Literature*, p. 323.

style center, is the style of the first man who ever made printed English speak to the whole nation. For Tindale fixed the style of the English Bible. The subdued richness, the strong beat of the rhythm, and all the other subtler qualities which clothe the style with its simple and unconscious earnestness, we owe to him, the first translator. . . . Though he did not complete the translation of the Old Testament, yet the New Testament and the historical books of the Old Testament which came from him, needed only revision in details. And it is the crowning merit of the line of revisers down to and including King James's companies, that they were wise enough not to attempt to alter the character of the style."⁷

In later passages of the same book Mr. Gardiner seems slightly to modify his position, so far as to allow a certain amount of credit to Tyndale's co-workers and successors: "By one of the curious unfathered traditions which make up so much of the literary history of the sixteenth century Coverdale has been credited with adding the 'grace' of style which is said to mark the Authorized Version: 'Grace' is not a very happy term for any style so robust and earnest, and Coverdale may well share with the other men who worked over Tyndale's words some of the praise for the perfect flexibility and smoothness attained by the final version: but it is enough credit to their discretion and literary sense that

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 324, 325.

they did not blunt the clearness and force which Tindale left as the crowning virtues of his noble prose. To him we may safely ascribe all the most important qualities of the translation—the energy, the contagious earnestness, the unassuming dignity and the vividness—by which it holds its place in our literature. He once for all in his version determined the style of the English Bible.”^s

This is in some degree giving the case away, since “flexibility and smoothness” are of course qualities of style. As differentiating media they are fully as satisfactory as “contagious earnestness,” a moral quality shared by most if not all of the sixteenth-century Reformers. Further on we are told that Coverdale’s influence in strengthening the rhythm and other musical qualities of the English Bible was important; and again, in speaking of the Rheims version of the New Testament, Mr. Gardiner says:

“If this version had not been made and had not been used so freely by the revisers of 1611, it is certain that our English Bible would have lacked something of its richness of sound.”^o

These admissions are interesting as showing the relentless power of facts to modify the position of one who, with all his general open-mindedness, gives evidence of desiring to make out a good case for Tyndale.

^s *Ibid.*, pp. 327, 328.

^o *Ibid.*, p. 343.

Introduction

Professor Gardiner, it may be said in passing, is not alone in holding the view that Tyndale originated the style of our English Bible. Literary style being usually thought of as personal it is quite the natural thing in treating of the style of the Authorized version to look upon it as the creation of some individual; and Tyndale's contribution to Biblical prose being the largest, his name would come first to mind. Thus, to quote an authority of repute:

"From first to last his style and his interpretation are his own, and in the originality of Tindale is included in a large measure the originality of our English version. For not only did Tindale contribute to it directly the substantial basis of half of the Old Testament (in all probability) and of the whole of the New, but he established a standard of Biblical translation which others followed. It is even of less moment that by far the greater part of his translation remains intact in our present Bibles, than that his spirit animates the whole. He toiled faithfully himself, and where he failed he left to those who should come after the secret of success. The achievement was not for one but for many; but he fixed the type according to which the later labourers worked. His influence decided that our Bible should be popular and not literary, speaking in a simple dialect, and that so by its simplicity it should be endowed with permanence. He felt by a happy instinct the potential affinity between Hebrew and English idioms, and en-

riched our language and thought forever with the characteristics of the Semitic mind.”¹⁰

But scholarly opinion has been divided in this matter. Prof. George P. Marsh pays a high tribute to Tyndale's predecessor in the field of Bible translation, John Wycliffe, who produced a translation of the Vulgate into the English of his day toward the close of the fourteenth century. This Middle-English version had, in the opinion of Professor Marsh, a powerful influence over all subsequent translations. He dwells especially on the excellence of this early version of the New Testament. “The uniformity of diction and grammar,” he says, “in Wycliffe's New Testament gave that work a weight as a model of devotional composition and scriptural phraseology, which secured its general adoption; and not only the special forms I have mentioned, but many other archaisms of the standard translation, both in vocabulary and in syntax, were adopted by Purvey and Tyndale from Wycliffe, and by the revisors of 1611 from Tyndale, and have thus remained almost without change for 500 years. In fact, so much of the Wycliffite sacred dialect is retained in the standard version, that though a modern reader may occasionally be embarrassed by an obsolete word, idiom, or spelling, which occurs, in Wycliffe's translation, yet if the great Reformer himself were now to be restored to life, he would

¹⁰ Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible*, p. 158.

probably be able to read our common Bible from beginning to end, without having to ask the explanation of a single passage.”¹¹

The true relation to each other of the two great men is probably indicated in the following paragraph by the same writer: “Tyndale is merely a full-grown Wycliffe, and his recension of the New Testament is just what his great predecessor would have made it, had he awakened again to see the dawn of that glorious day, of which his own life and labors kindled the morning twilight. Not only does Tyndale retain the general grammatical structure of the older version, but most of its felicitous verbal combinations, and, what is more remarkable, he preserves even the rhythmic flow of its periods, which is again repeated in the recension of 1611. Wycliffe, then, must be considered as having originated the diction and phraseology, which for five centuries has constituted the consecrated dialect of the English speech; and Tyndale as having given to it that finish and perfection, which have so admirably adapted it to the expression of religious doctrine and sentiment, and to the narration of the remarkable series of historical facts which are recorded in the Christian Scriptures.”¹²

It will be interesting now to consider the opinion of the late Edmund Gosse, literary critic, who briefly touched upon the origin of Biblical prose. “It must not

¹¹ *Origin and History of the English Language*, lect. 8, p. 370.

¹² *Lectures on the English Language*, p. 627.

be overlooked," writes Mr. Gosse, "that the English version of 1611, which is what was alone in use until the present generation, was not truly Jacobean, or even Elizabethan, but an archaic and eclectic arrangement of phrases, the bulk of which had come down to Andrewes and his colleagues from Parker, and so from Cranmer, and so from Coverdale and Tyndale, and so from Wycliffe and Purvey, and represented in fact a modification of a medieval impression of the Vulgate. The Authorized English Bible represents the tongue of no historical period, but is an artificial product, selected with exquisite care, from the sacred felicities of two centuries and a half."¹²

Unfortunately this is all that Mr. Gosse said on the subject. If he had seen fit to treat it at length, we should have had a most interesting and suggestive history of Biblical prose in the making, for he shows himself keenly alive to the verbal felicities of our English Bible, and to the variety of the sources from which they have been drawn; he also recognizes the overshadowing influence of the Vulgate. His viewpoint is a much broader one than that of Mr. Gardiner; still it leaves something to be desired. Had he seen the style of the English Bible, not only in its relation to ancient sources, but also more directly in its relation to the social, religious, and political development of the English people, and its advancement step by step with the growth of the language, he

¹² *A Short History of Modern English Literature*, pp. 127, 128.

must have called it, not so much an artificial as a natural product, the necessary outgrowth of certain facts and conditions.

The difficulty with Mr. Gardiner's view, to return to it for a moment, is that it does not take in all the facts, either of the external history of the Bible or of its internal history as revealed in the interesting and highly significant changes that occurred in the course of the successive translations and revisions. With him, Tyndale is always in the foreground. Other men and agencies are considered chiefly as being influenced by him. Yet if one takes a reasonably broad survey of the field, he must conclude that there were other translators in the sixteenth century besides Tyndale who were endowed with literary gifts of no mean order. Had Mr. Gardiner studied minutely the successive translations, he must have seen that these men introduced changes into Tyndale's version which ennobled, dignified, and enriched the style, and gave it to observant eyes a new complexion. Moreover, these other men translated, entirely apart from Tyndale, the Psalms, Job, and the prophetic books, by far the most difficult portions of the ancient writings, and they did their work so well that these books are in no way inferior to those which Tyndale translated.

Mr. Gardiner, in taking the larger survey, would likewise have seen that these Bible translators were only a small part of the English Reformation, which had its

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political and social as well as its religious aspects. And as one phase of the nation's social development, he would have considered the growth of the English language, and how far its period of development coincided with that of Biblical prose. The translation of the English Bible is vitally bound up with all the great national movements which were going on in England while it was slowly taking form, and apart from them it cannot be fully understood.

It is the design of this book to present a study of the prose of the Authorized version, not as a thing apart, but in its obvious historical setting, and in its successive stages of development. The following pages will maintain that the style of the English Bible is not to be referred to any one man or group of men, nor to any one period of English literature, but is a highly organized and composite product, the result of an orderly development extending over more than two centuries, and having its earliest beginnings in an even remoter past.

The order of treatment will be as follows: There will be a consideration of the two main forces at work in the life of the nation during the period covered by the various Bible translations, and the great national institutions which grew up as a result of the interaction of these forces. It will be seen that the prose of the Bible bears some superficial marks of its gradual development. It will appear also that the Hebrew of the Old Testament has exerted, both directly and indirectly, a strong

influence upon Biblical prose, this being due in part to the comparatively unformed state of the English language when the earlier translations were made.

These preliminary considerations out of the way, a brief survey will be made of the successive versions of the Bible, from which it will be seen that external forces of a national character have operated in the direction of the gradual development of a certain style. Second, the internal evidence of such a style will appear in the form of quotations from the successive versions. Third, the development as a whole will receive attention. In the last two chapters of the book, consideration will be given respectively to the Revised version of 1885 and the Revised Standard version New Testament of 1946.

Let us first review briefly the general historical setting of the English Bible. The period of time embraced between the completion of the first version of Wycliffe and the appearance of the Authorized version is 227 years. Tyndale's translation of the New Testament was published about the middle of this period. Most of the important versions were made in or after his time; but the earlier translators, John Wycliffe and John Purvey, may be said to have prepared the ground, and they also sowed some seed which was destined to spring up and bear fruit in stylistic modifications. During the close of the century elapsing between Tyndale's first edition of the New Testament and the appearance of the Authorized version, the Bible was subjected to successive

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and thoroughgoing revisions; one version after another came out, each for the most part building upon those which had gone before. The final version was given out, therefore, not as a revision, but as a translation, so free were its six companies of translators to go over the whole ground, and to give the best possible English rendering of every word and phrase in the Sacred Writings.

What was the situation in England during these two and one-half centuries? A struggle was going on between two great forces, which for want of better terms will be called medievalism and modernism, and as the fruit of the struggle, and containing in themselves the elements of both, we have the English political constitution, the English Church, and the English Bible. Each of the three is in its essential nature a compromise, an admirable example of Anglo-Saxon moderation and good sense. These three institutions not only grew out of the same struggle, but reached maturity, took on their permanent form, about the same time.

The political constitution did not receive its finishing touches till later, but its main lines had been clearly defined by the end of the sixteenth century. No ruler ever took greater pains to keep in touch with her subjects than did Elizabeth. James I ascended the throne as a constitutional monarch, and when his successor, Charles I, forgot his place and the fact that he virtually ruled by consent of the people, he was put out of the way as

an anachronism, a hindrance in the path of progress which the nation had marked out for itself.

The English Church first reached full maturity in the reign of James I. The foundations were laid under Henry VIII. It was seen even in his time that Anglicanism was not wholly to follow the lead of Luther. Some of the English Reformers, Tyndale among them, would probably have desired that it follow the continental pattern; but the great mass of the English people, both upper and lower classes, wished it otherwise, and Henry VIII's horror of Lutheranism as a foreign and distracting element, and one which would ruthlessly break with the past, had in it something essentially English. He represented the innate conservatism of his subjects in holding to the historic continuity of the church. Crying abuses were to be corrected, the doctrines which had given rise to these abuses were to be given up or modified, the political power of the clergy was to be curtailed, and their wealth in large part taken from them; foreign domination in church affairs was to go; but the main pillars of the church, which in England already then had a history of more than a thousand years, were to be allowed to stand. The medieval structure was to receive a certain infusion of modern ideas, that it might more faithfully embody the religious feeling of the nation.

It is well to remember that in the time of James I the Anglican establishment was truly national. It had its two wings, corresponding in the main to the high

church and the low church of today; but at that time it represented the whole nation. The Puritans were not, as the Nonconformists of today, a separate body; they were a branch of the national church. When the Puritans did separate, the church lost an important element of strength, and it has never been truly national since, though even today it probably represents English sentiment and feeling as a whole more nearly than any other church.

It was inevitable that the English Bible should not take its final form till the English Church had reached maturity. The two were closely connected from the start. Both were intensely national. The common people in England demanded the Bible in their mother tongue. The demand was loudly voiced even in Wycliffe's day, and along with it there was an equal demand for social reform, but the popular movement of those days was not entirely free from certain lawless elements which proved its undoing. It was accordingly put down for the time being.

A century later it was to make itself heard again, this time effectually. The world had moved onward in the meantime. The power of the people had grown, that of the medieval church had declined. The two forces which they represented, modernism, and medievalism, were accordingly more nearly equal. Indeed, for a time it looked as if modernism would break over the bounds and monopolize the whole religious life of the people.

But when the smoke of conflict had cleared away, it was seen that both forces had abiding elements, and these were to be recognized in the new church, which was to stand for the nation, and in the book which was to give the English people their ritual and their creed.

It is only as we rightly comprehend the nature and mutual relations of these two great forces, which have been prominent in the historical development of our English Bible, that we shall be able intelligently to judge of its literary style. Indeed, the observant reader of Biblical prose hardly needs to know its history. He will perceive at the outset certain superficial evidences of the two main elements, and the more intensely he studies the text as embodied in the successive translations, the more prominent will the evidences become. Noticeable also is the fact that the two elements are marvelously harmonized and balanced, the forces they represent being mostly in equilibrium, so that the style which has resulted from their long struggle presents the appearance of a unified whole.

The popular element in the Bible, that which endears it to the masses, is perhaps most uniformly recognized. If the question were put to any company of thinking people, "What is the outstanding characteristic of Biblical prose?" probably the majority would answer offhand, "Its marvelous simplicity." There would be some, however, who would feel that even stretching the word *simplicity* to cover all that would ordinarily

be included under easy intelligibility, directness, and freedom from affectation, it did not tell the whole story: that something equally vital and characteristic had been left out. Yet they might hesitate to name the other thing lest it seem to contradict the quality already mentioned, which they perfectly allow is there. If they did name it, they would probably say that Biblical prose at its best is marked by a noble distinction; that it has strong aristocratic tendencies, and fairly abounds in those words of ancient lineage which, judiciously used, lend weight and dignity to style.

Albert S. Cook, in his admirable little book, *The Bible and English Prose Style*, suggests that the main characteristics of Biblical diction may be comprehended under the single term *noble naturalness*. Explaining his use of this phrase, he says that by *natural* he means "conformable to human nature." And to "naturalness," when applied to the style of the Bible, must be added "an accent of dignity or elevation."¹⁴

This twofold nature of Biblical prose is manifest even in the structure of individual sentences, where expressions almost bordering on colloquialism are seen to rub shoulders, as it were, with phrases of stately dignity. It is still more prominent if verses or chapters are compared. The Bible furnishes admirable examples of the ornate style, and it is also a rich repository of those racy, idiomatic phrases that savor of the soil. Both elements

¹⁴ Page xvi.

by some subtle alchemy are blended into a homogeneous product, and that a product of a certain kind. The selections from both sides have been made with a view to fitness and harmony, the homely elements being such as were free from vulgarity, and able to blend with something higher; the nobler elements being such as would combine well with the lower.

Thus there is in the prose of the Bible a literary illustration of the combination of strength with grace and distinction which resulted from the union of the Saxon and Norman elements in the English race. Both elements, moreover, were selected and combined under the influence of a great, overshadowing idea, that of producing an adequate medium for the expression of religious thought and feeling. And back of it all, and furnishing the motive power, was this struggle between people and church, democracy and aristocracy, modernism and medievalism, which is responsible for so much in English history.

The quasi-ccclesiastical trend in Biblical English, which has been brought about by this careful choosing of a vocabulary based on a certain principle, is fairly marked. Johan Storm has spoken of the "wonderful force and solemnity" of our Authorized version, in which he thinks it surpasses all others, not even excepting that of Luther. "The language," he goes on to say, "is just ancient enough to give the impression of noble dignity, and yet not too old to be intelligible. . . . There is for

example something extremely effective and expressive in the mere substitution of 'verily' for 'indeed' and 'truly,' or of 'unto' for 'to.' If the expression is, 'Verily I say unto you,' one is in altogether a different atmosphere than when the expression is, 'Indeed, I tell you.' The latter may be earnest and forcible enough, but it is a human expression, while the former is divine."¹⁶

This utterance of the German philologist brings out clearly a striking fact in English literary history; the existence, namely, of a sacred dialect, having in some measure its own vocabulary as well as its own peculiar laws and usages, and yet, by reason of its identification with English religious sentiment from the start and its slow growth as it were from the very soil, retaining a strong hold upon the affections of the common people, and perfectly intelligible to them.

The "force and solemnity" which mark the sacred dialect cannot be attributed merely to the elevated character of Biblical themes; the language itself is cast in a heroic mold, and seems a thing apart from the sordid cares of everyday life. It is charged with an other-world atmosphere, so that the mere sound of the familiar words and phrases tends to put one into a devotional mood.

A perfect instrument of this kind is usually the result of a process of natural selection extending over a

¹⁶ Johan Storm, *Englische Philologie* (Leipzig, 1896), vol. 2, p. 995, translated and used in *Hebraisms in the Authorized Version of the Bible*, by William Roseneau, pp. 42, 43.

considerable period of time. Certain words which are found suitable come to be set apart for sacred purposes; some for exclusive use in the sacred dialect; others for use only in a particular signification, retaining their common meaning in the language of ordinary life. Again, words of the home and fireside are taken into the dialect and further hallowed by their association with terms exclusively religious. Trivial words are little by little weeded out; so also those that savor too strongly of secular business. On the other hand, words with a noble history are sought out, especially those that have sacred associations; likewise words and phrases that are sonorous, giving promise when fitly joined together of producing a stately harmony. This is about the way one would expect the sacred dialect to grow; and as will presently be seen, this is the way it actually did grow.

There is one fact which must ever be borne in mind in dealing with Biblical prose; namely, that the English Bible is a translation and not an original work. Its style, accordingly, consists in part of the way in which the authors have adjusted themselves, on the one hand, to the requirements of the original text and, on the other, to the comprehension of the English people. The fact that the original in this case is a book of Eastern origin, richly Oriental alike in thought and expression, and abounding in the boldest imagery, makes the problem of adequate translation a more difficult one, and the success, when attained, at once more remarkable and of

higher excellence. The translators had to mediate, as it were, between East and West, to make the glowing imagery of the Orient perfectly intelligible to their readers without loss of freshness and power. The result would be something unique under almost any circumstances, for it is when a language is taxed to its utmost capacity that its hidden strength is revealed; but in the case under consideration there was a greater scope for freshness and originality in renderings in that the language into which the translation was to be made was in its early youth, having much elasticity, and, while not wanting in idioms of its own, decidedly hospitable to new ones.

Wycliffe's Bible, which, as will be shown later, exerted no small influence on the style of succeeding versions, came out in the latter part of the fourteenth century, at the dawn of Middle English prose, and its straightforward, literal rendering of the Vulgate, although decidedly crude in places, did much to prepare the language for the adequate rendering of this body of Oriental thought. When Tyndale began his work as translator in the early part of the sixteenth century, the English language had attained to a higher state of development, and most of its forms and idioms were comparatively fixed; still, it had great powers of adaptation, and grew marvelously during that century, taking on new grace and dignity, as well as vastly increasing its vocabulary, under the influence of the Renaissance. The

Authorized version of the Bible, it will be remembered, did not come out till early in the seventeenth century, when the language, in the hands of the great Elizabethans, had reached its highest pitch of power and efficiency.

This growing up side by side of the English language and the English version of the Bible, with mutual give and take from the beginning, helps to account for the vitality of the translation and the strong hold it has upon the English people. Indeed, it seems to partake more of the character of an original work than of a translation; and in a certain sense it is original, since the dominating ideas of the Bible were not entirely unknown to the people of Great Britain even before the Saxon invasion, and well nigh the whole of Anglo-Saxon literature was Christian in tone. This historical background of Oriental thought in the life of the nation was an important means in making the translation, which from the first was mainly a literal, word-for-word rendering, intelligible to the English people. It caused the Hebrew idioms to seem natural; it identified them with the soil, and made the Bible to become in time a kind of national epic. In no other language has there been such a fusion of Oriental and Western forms of expression, and in no other literature is the most widely circulated translation of the Bible written in a style which combines such charm and distinction of manner with such admirable simplicity.

There is, then, as a very marked ingredient in Biblical prose this infusion of Hebraisms, some of which came directly from the Hebrew, others through the Vulgate or the Greek of the New Testament, which abounds in them.¹⁶ The style is colored, however, not only by these foreign idioms, introduced bodily into the language, and only less noticeable because they have now come to be regarded as legitimate English idioms; but also by the search for vernacular words and idioms which would adequately convey the highly imaginative content of the original, and match its splendid concreteness.

This fusion of East and West, of the old with the new, of a language with practically no syntax but a wonderfully rich and poetic vocabulary with one which was comparatively practical and prosaic, would in itself account for the style of the English Bible being something unique. Still, it would not ensure that uniformity of tone, that delicate molding and fashioning, which are so necessary to produce an artistic whole. We must have some guiding principle which, operating through and by means of the various conditions and agencies instanced, tended to keep the stream in a certain channel. This principle, as has already been suggested, seems to be that of an equilibrium between the two chief contending forces of the time, medievalism and modernism. There is no doubt that these forces were at work.

¹⁶ See William Roseneau, *Hebraisms in the Authorized Version of the Bible*.

Introduction

There is no doubt, either, that they resulted in the building up of the most characteristic and permanent of English institutions. How far they were productive in giving us our English Bible, will be the subject of the two following chapters which will give the reader what might well be called a bird's-eye view of all the different English translations of the Bible, beginning with that of Wycliffe, and extending to the one generally known as the King James version.

CHAPTER II

Early Beginnings of Our English Bible

The claims of Coverdale, as far as his Bible is concerned, must be reduced to the modest limits which he fixed himself. But though he is not original yet he was endowed with an instinct of discrimination which is scarcely less precious than originality, and a delicacy of ear which is no mean qualification for a popular translator. It would be an interesting work to note the subtle changes of order and turns of expression which we owe to him. In the epistle from which most of our illustrations have been taken "the pride of LIFE" and "the world PASS-ETH away" are immeasurable improvements on Tindale's "the pride of GOODS," and "the world VANISHETH away." . . . His phrasing is nearly always rich and melodious. The general character of his version as compared with that of Tindale may be very fairly represented by that of the Prayer Book Version of the Psalms as compared with the Authorised Version of the Bible.—BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT, *A General View of the History of the English Bible*, pp. 164, 165.

CHAPTER II

Early Beginnings of Our English Bible

THE TRANSLATION of small portions of Scripture, such as the Lord's prayer, probably goes back to still earlier times; but it is known that Bede rendered the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon in the year of his death, A.D. 735. His work has not been handed down to us. There is, however, an Anglo-Saxon Psalter dating from the latter part of the ninth century, interlineated with the Latin, as in other early versions, and apparently intended for a member of the clergy or of one of the religious orders. King Alfred translated certain of the psalms, and (admirable example of the loyalty to Scripture of this most English king) prefixed his book of laws with a version of the Decalogue. There are also two interlinear translations of the Gospels, one of which, known variously as the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Book of Durham, or the Gospels of St. Cuthbert, is of not later date than the middle of the tenth century. The Latin manuscript which was taken from what is called the "Old Latin" version, antedating the Vulgate, was prepared by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, the Anglo-Saxon gloss of which was prepared by a priest who gives his name as

Aldred. The Rushworth Gospels date from a slightly later period. About the close of the tenth century Abbot Aelfric translated the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Esther, Job, part of Kings, and some of the Apocryphal books into Anglo-Saxon.

The medieval tendency was the dominant one in these early translations. They were made by the clergy for their own use, and were oftentimes not so much renderings into the vernacular as helps to an understanding of the Latin, which from generation to generation was taking on added sanctity as the repository of the sacred oracles and the medium of church ritual.

There was, however, in the early poetical paraphrases, notably those of Caedmon and his school, a marked popularizing tendency. These crude efforts in the way of religious poetry, together with the later miracle plays, served to familiarize the people with some of the outstanding facts of Bible history, and with such terms as *God*, *heaven*, and *angels*, thus laying the first rude foundations of a sacred dialect.

In the early thirteenth century appeared the *Ormulum*, a manuscript of some twenty thousand words giving a metrical version of the Gospels and the Acts, this being the first rendering of these or any other books of the Bible into English. The writer shows popularizing tendencies when he says in his preface: "If any one wants to know [we render his words in modern English] why I have done this deed, I have done it so that all

young Christian folk may depend upon the gospel only, and may follow with all their might its holy teaching, in thought, and word, and deed.”¹

There are a number of Norman-French metrical paraphrases, as well as translations of portions of the Bible; but not till the fourteenth century do we have a literal translation into English of even the Psalter. One such was made by William of Shoreham, in Kent, about 1320, and another some twenty years later, by Richard Rolle, of Hampole, near Doncaster, in Yorkshire. The latter takes his readers into his confidence, and gives them some interesting information as to his methods of literary work. “In this work,” he says, “y seke no strange Englishe, but esieste and comuneste, and sich that is most lyche to the Latyne: so that thei that knoweth not the Latyne by the Englishe may come to many Latyne wordis.”²

Here in this beginning of literal English translations of any considerable portion of the Bible is a clear expression of two leading ideas which in one form or another appear again and again, and may be said to dominate the whole history of Scripture translation in England. In this case it may be said that the two ideas are in equilibrium in the mind of one man. Let us amplify a little. Hampole, as this writer is usually called, tells us that he is governed in his choice of a suitable English vocabulary

¹ H. W. Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible: A Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions From 1382 to 1885*, p. 40.

² *The English Hexapla*, p. 7.

with which to render the Latin original by a preference for easy and common words. Here the popularizing element is emphasized. He is thinking of making his translation widely intelligible; of having it come home to men's bosoms. But this is not all. He further gives the preference to words which are like the Latin. Here is the working of the medieval tendency, a reverence for old forms, a special love for the Latin as the repository of the sacred oracles.

It does not follow that the words thus chosen were necessarily of definitely Latin origin. They may have been Anglo-Saxon words that sounded like the Latin, or bore some other resemblance to that language. It is a curious fact that the English *Book of Common Prayer*, although its diction is largely Anglo-Saxon, bears in the rhythm of its sentences and the vocal qualities of word and phrase a marked resemblance to medieval Latin. There is the same measured rise and fall, the full sonorous tones, and swelling cadences; only, to our ears, the English of the Prayer Book has a certain sweetness of melody which seems lacking in the Latin. But the musical qualities of our English Bible undoubtedly have been drawn in part from the Vulgate, and in this early selection of words "lyche the Latyne," there seems to be the first feeble attempts at rhythm and cadence.

How well Hampole succeeded in his pious effort may be judged by a perusal of his version of the twenty-third psalm, a portion of which is here given:

Early Beginnings of Our English Bible

"Our lord governeth me and nothyng to me shal wante: stede of pasture that he me sette.

"In the water of hetyng forth he me brougte: my soule he turnyde.

"He ladde me on in the stretis of rygtwisnesse: for his name.

"For win gif I hadde goo in myddil of the shadewe of deeth: I shal not dreede yueles, for thou art with me.

"Thi geerde and thi staf: thei haue coumfortid me. Thou hast greythid in my sygt a bord: agens hem that angryn me.

"Thou fattide myn heued in oyle: and my chalys drunkenyng what is cleer.

"And thi mercy shal folewe me: in alle the dayes of my lyf.

"And that I wone in the hous of oure lord in the lengthe of dayes." "

The careful reader will recognize in this humble effort some trace at least of those qualities of sweetness and melody which make our Authorized version of the Psalms such delightful reading.

Wycliffe's translation of the Bible, partly the work of his own pen, and partly that of his associates, notably Nicholas of Hereford, who would seem to have translated nearly the whole of the Old Testament, was a much greater undertaking and came out about the year 1384; but a very thoroughgoing revision, made by Purvey,

^a *Ibid.*

appeared four years later, and continued from that time onward to be the accepted version. In his preface Purvey tells of the motives that prompted the work, and he also explains at some length his method of procedure:

"For these resons and othere, with comune charite to saue alle men in oure rewme, whiche God wole haue sauid, a symple creature [he means himself] hath translaid the bible out of Latyn into English. First, this symple creature hadde myche trauaile, with diuerse felawis and helperis, to gedere manie elde biblis and othere doctouris, and comune glosis, and to make oo Latyn bible sumdel trewe; and thanne to studie it of the newe, the text with the glosse . . . ; the thridde tyme to counseile with elde gramariens . . . ; the iiij tyme to translate as cleerli as he code to the sentence, and to haue manie gode felawis and kunnynges at the correcting of the translacioun. First it is to knowe, that the best translating is . . . to translate after the sentence, and not onely aftir the wordis, so that the sentence be as opin, either openere, in English as in Latyn, and go not fer from the lettre."⁴

Purvey's revision, as might be gathered from the foregoing quotation, is an improvement on the first Wycliffe version from the viewpoint of English style. His setting it forth as a discovery that it was necessary in places to translate according to the sense, and not word for word, is interesting as revealing the extremely literal methods which had prevailed up to that time in transla-

⁴ Westcott, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

tions of the Scriptures, owing largely to a medieval sense of reverence for the Sacred Writings. Purvey himself found it well to "go not fer from the lettre," and later translators have followed his example, so that our Bible as a whole comes as near to being a word-for-word translation as the genius of the language permits.

Wycliffe justly ranks high in the roll of Bible translators. Not only did he produce the first complete English Bible, but he also secured for it a wide circulation by means of his body of numerous itinerant preachers. His own position was one of commanding importance. He was easily the most influential man in Oxford, a center of learning which in those days drew eager students not only from all over Great Britain but also from many points on the Continent.

"Last of the Schoolmen and first of the Reformers," as he has been called, Wycliffe stood at the parting of the ways. He looked both forward and backward; but as he became older, the forward look more and more became the dominant one. He affords a marked instance of a man's becoming more radical with increasing age. His translation of the Bible, the most daring and radical thing he did, was not undertaken till in the closing years of his life, and was brought to completion, as far as can be ascertained, only a short time before the final stroke of paralysis put an end to his activities.

Wycliffe's immediate object in translating the Scriptures was for the instruction and use of the "poor

priests," a band of popular preachers in some ways resembling the friars, poor but not mendicant, without conventual vows, and pledged to teach the Scriptures. The Bible was placed in the hands of these priests in order that the truths it contained might be freely taught to the common people. Wycliffe thus shows strong popular sympathies. He was the people's mouthpiece in the demand for an open Bible, which at this time was loud and insistent. "The unlearned," writes Purvey, "cry after Holy Writ to know it, with great cost and peril of their lives." ^a Wycliffe gave it to them.

The translation itself is a remarkable piece of work. It bears the impress of a strong man battling with difficulties. English prose in that early day was only half formed. What was to become a sacred dialect was in its earliest stages. Even with the help afforded by previous renderings of portions of Holy Writ, the task of making a complete and scholarly translation was no light one. Nevertheless the work proved a substantial success. The style is somewhat bare and rugged and occasionally very crude; but it moves in the main on a high level, and at its best is not wanting in melody and a well-marked rhythm. Moreover, the style of the New Testament, which is believed to have come chiefly from Wycliffe's own pen, is different from that of his other works. In the latter there is a colloquial freedom which in the New Testament largely gives way to a certain

^a Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

quiet dignity, showing him to be consciously or unconsciously following a dialect which had already in part taken form, and which he and his reviser, Purvey, were to do much toward developing.

The style is somewhat uneven, to be sure, and there are renderings that seem to us quite out of keeping with the tone of Biblical prose as we know it. This departure is due in part to changes in the values of certain words and in part to faulty translation. We do not like to be told, for instance, that the "kingdom of heaven is likened to sour-dough, which a woman took and hid in thre measuris of mele til it were al soured." "Behold the crowes" sounds a trifle ludicrous to ears accustomed to "consider the ravens." So also does such an expression as "the entrailes of holi men," which in our Authorized version has become "the bowels of the saints." Jacob's love affair loses a good deal of its romance when we read that "Leah was blere-eyed," and it gives us a mild shock to be told that a certain man at Lystra was "sick in the feet, and had sit crooked from his mother's womb which never had gone." We dislike, moreover, to think of Christ as giving the instruction: "Be ye sli as serpents."

But these are small things compared with the many real excellencies of the work. We owe to Wycliffe a large number of the most characteristic of Bible expressions. Some beautiful verses have come down from him unchanged. These, for instance: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." "Therefore love

is the fulfilling of the law." He first applied the word *parable* to the allegories of our Saviour, and though Tyndale tried to introduce in its place the term *similitude*, he did not succeed. The Authorized version returned to the older word. "Riches in glory" is another fine phrase of his which later translators tried to change to "glorious riches." Wycliffe first gave the magnificent rendering, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God," the latter part of which Tyndale very unadvisedly changed to "yea, the bottom of God's secrets." Tyndale also tried unsuccessfully to change "Harden not your hearts" into "Be not hard-hearted"; "the Father of spirits" to "the Father of spiritual gifts"; and "the tree of life" to "the wode of life." In these and many other cases, Wycliffe's was at once the most literal and the most felicitous rendering. He set Tyndale an excellent model. "The Communion of the Holy Ghost," "firstfruits," "the strait gate," "man of sin," "son of perdition," "savourest not the things that be of God," "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—these renderings and a great many more like them, which enter largely into the texture of Biblical prose as we know it, all date from Wycliffe. Some idea of his general style may be gained from the following passage:

"ihesus answerid and seide to hir, eche man that drynkith of this watir; schal thirst eftsone, but he that drynkith of the watir that I schal [g]eue hym; schal not thirst withouten ende, but the watir that I schal [g]eue

hym, schal be made in hym a welle of watir springinge up in to euerlastynge liif, the womman seith to hym, sire, [g]eue me this watir that I thirst not; nether come hider to drawe, ihesus seith to hir, go clepe thin housbonde: come hidir, the womman answerid and seide, I haue noon housbonde, ihesus seith to hir, thou seidist wel, that I haue noon housbonde, for thou hast hadde fyue housbondis, and he that thou hast is not thin housbonde, this thing thou seidist sothli.”⁶

The strong tendency to concreteness which Wycliffe shared with other early translators, is happily exemplified in the opening verses of the tenth chapter of Luke's Gospel: “And after these things, the Lord ihesus ordeyned also other seuenti and tweyne, and sent him bi tweyne and tweyne bifor his face: in to euery citee and place whidir he was to come, and he seide to him, there is myche ripe corne; and fewe werke men, therfor preie e the lord of the ripe corne: that he send werke men in to his ripe corne.”⁷ There is quaintness here, but also a certain naive beauty, and a strong visual appeal. These and similar verses needed some toning down in the final version. Nevertheless, concreteness remains one of the outstanding features of our English Bible. Terseness and simplicity are other characteristic qualities in which Wycliffe's renderings are usually all that could be desired. His style is terse sometimes to the ex-

⁶ *The English Hexapla*, John 4:13-18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Luke 10:1, 2.

tent of being bald. He also held close to the Latin text, having all the schoolman's reverence for the Vulgate, the rich verbal harmony and rhythms of which he in part reproduces.

The position of the Wycliffe Bible as a strong formative influence in the building up of the sacred dialect rests upon its wide and representative circulation. The "poor priests" were both numerous and active. "You cannot travel anywhere in England," wrote one of Wycliffe's opponents, "but of every two men you meet, one will be a Lollard." * The movement was by no means confined to the common people. Wycliffe said the knights inquired after the Word of God. In Wright's *Political Poems and Songs* we have this allusion to their devotion:

"Hit is unkyndly for a kni[gh]t,
That shuld a kinges castel kepe
To babble the Bibel day and ni[gh]t." *

No fewer than a hundred and seventy manuscripts containing the whole or a part of Wycliffe's Bible have come down to us, and this in spite of the Act of 1408 condemning the translation and forbidding its use under the severest penalties. No such ban was ever placed upon the works of Chaucer, Wycliffe's great contemporary, yet fewer of his manuscripts have been preserved

* Hoare, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

* *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History, Composed During the Period From the Accession of Edw. III to That of Ric. III.*, ed. by Thomas Wright, vol. 2, p. 244.

to us. Indeed the Wycliffe Bible seems largely to have superseded the Vulgate. In view of the wide circulation that this first complete English Bible evidently had, it must in the nature of things have exerted a considerable influence upon all subsequent versions. Even if later translators had entirely ignored it, which, as will be seen, they were far from doing, still they would have owed it a considerable debt as a pioneer version which had popularized Biblical thoughts and conceptions, and had given to some characteristic phrases an enduring form in English. The glosses in these Wycliffe manuscripts are eloquent of the educational work they were accomplishing among the common people. Here are a few samples: "*Incorruptible*, that mau not dye ne ben peyred"; "*Creatore*, that is, maker of nought"; "*Acorden no*, or bysemen not"; "*Proud*, high ouer measure"; "*Affection*, or love"; "*Benignite*, or good-will"; "*Justified*, or founded trew."

It is perhaps no more than fair to say that it was not till the Lollard movement showed strong socialistic leanings that the church took severe measures against the circulation of the Bible. The movement was evidently believed to have lawless elements, which threatened with disruption the very foundations of society. The claim of the Lollards that "eche lewd man that schul be saved is a real priest maad of God" was sufficiently alarming to the stanch churchman of the time, who regarded summary suppression of the vernacular Bible as amply jus-

tified by the likelihood that "holy write in Englishe wole make cristen men at debate, and suggetis to rebelle against her sovereigns."

The outbreak of the Peasants' Revolt naturally intensified these feelings of alarm, and led to stern interdiction of the book which was supposed to have helped to foment the widespread feelings of dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, the Scriptures continued to be circulated and read, though for the most part secretly. As late as early in the sixteenth century people were subjected to various penalties for having the Wycliffe Bible in their possession, surely a striking proof of the vitality and importance of this first translation.

With all his zeal as a Reformer, Wycliffe remained to the last a schoolman. William Tyndale, on the other hand, is a true product of the Renaissance. He first approached the preparation of a vernacular version of the Bible in the spirit of a modern scholar. He had the scholar's detachment, and also, with possibly a few exceptions, where his zeal as a Reformer led him astray, the scholar's strict regard for truth.

Of Tyndale's life but little is known. He was born in Gloucestershire, about the year 1492. He studied at Oxford, where he took the degree of Master of Arts, and then went on to Cambridge to continue his studies. In due time he was ordained a priest, and did some preaching; but his heart was set on giving the English people the Bible in their own tongue. It was a matter of

deep conviction with him. He "had perceaued by experyence, how that it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in any truth, excepte ye scripture were playnly layde before their eyes in their Mother tonge, that they might se the processe, ordre and meaninge of the texte." ¹⁰

He sought to interest the Bishop of London in the undertaking, but in vain. The idea met with anything but encouragement in that quarter. "I . . . understode at the laste not only that there was no rowme in my lorde of londons palace to translate the new testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all englonde." ¹¹

Tyndale accordingly betook himself to Germany, where he is believed to have made the acquaintance of Luther and other Reformers.

In the spring of 1525, the manuscript of his New Testament being about ready for the press, he and his amanuensis, John Royce, proceeded to Cologne in order to have the book printed. An edition of three thousand copies was getting well under way when the city authorities issued orders that the work should be suspended immediately. Tyndale and Royce hastily departed, taking with them the sheets already printed, and took passage up the Rhine to Worms. In this famous city, which had become favorable to the Reformation, the quarto Testament, with prologues and marginal notes, was in course of time completed; but Tyndale first put out an edition

¹⁰ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

of three thousand copies of his New Testament in octavo, in which there were neither notes nor prologues. This first English New Testament to be translated directly from the Greek was a remarkably fine piece of work to come from one man, who had labored under very difficult circumstances; but Tyndale had high ideals, and he appended a note at the close of the book apologizing for "the rudnes of the worke." "Count it" he writes, "as a thing not having his full shape [Here given in modern spelling], but as it were born before his time, even as a thing begun rather than finished. In time to come (if God have appointed us there unto) we will give it his full shape: and put out if aught be added superfluously: and add to if aught be overlooked through negligence: and will enforce to bring to compendiousness, that which is now translated at the length, and to give light where it is required, and to seek in certain places more proper English, and with a table to expound the words which are not commonly used, and show how the scripture useth many words which are otherwise understood of the common people: and to help with a declaration where one tongue taketh not another. And will endeavor ourselves, as it were, to seethe it better, and to make it more apt for the weak stomachs: desiring them that are learned and able, to remember their duty, and to help thereunto: and to bestow unto the edifying of Christ's body (which is the congregation of them that believe) those gifts which they have received of God for the same

purpose. The grace that cometh of Christ be with them that love him. Pray for us.”¹²

In 1534 Tyndale brought out a revised edition of his New Testament, which contained a large number of changes, showing the author to be an excellent critic of his own work. He also published a translation of Jonah and of the Pentateuch; and it is all but certain that during his imprisonment at Vilvorde Castle he made a translation of the historical books from Joshua to Second Chronicles inclusive, which was embodied, as we shall see, in the so-called Matthew Bible. He was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536.

Tyndale represents the modern spirit. This is manifest in his break with the medieval church and his determination to make the Bible familiar to the masses. To the learned ecclesiastic who thought the people could better be without God's laws than the Pope's, he uttered the bold words: "I defy the Pope and his laws," and added, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."¹³ He kept his word, but it cost him his life.

Opposed to Tyndale's modern idea of a people's Bible, was the medieval conception of a Sacred Book entrusted to the keeping of a duly ordained and set-apart

¹² Robert Demaus, *William Tindale: A Biography*, pp. 164, 165.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

clergy. The pearl was not to be cast abroad and trodden underfoot of swine. It was not fitting that any person should "without reprehension read, reason, dispute, turn and toss the Scriptures." The divine oracles were of too sacred a character to be "sung, played, alleged of every tinker, taverner, rimer, minstrel," to be subjects of conversation "for ale benches, for boats and barges, and for every profane person and company." The poor plowmen could "in labouring the ground, sing the hymns and psalms either in known or unknown languages, as they heard them in the holy church," the virgins could "meditate upon the places and examples of chastity, modesty, and demureness; the married on conjugal faith and chastity." But that the common people should handle the whole Bible for themselves, seemed contrary to the eternal order of things. Was it for the pupil to teach his master, or the sheep to control the shepherd? Was it for the upstart student to reprove the fathers of error and ignorance?

Tyndale's New Testament had one generally objectionable feature. The author in his zeal for exact scholarship, but chiefly as a result of his strong reformative tendencies, had abandoned largely the venerable ecclesiastical words, endeared alike to clergy and people by their old associations, and invested with peculiar sanctity. Instead of *grace* he had often used *favor*; for *charity*, which had come down through the centuries freighted with a peculiarly rich collection of endearing

associations, and had largely developed a particular meaning, he had substituted *love*; *confess* he had rendered *acknowledge*; *penance* had become *repentance* or *amendment of life*; *priest* had become *elder*, and, perhaps worst of all, *church* had been turned into *congregation*.

The infinite disgust which this innovation of the Reformer inspired among the loyal clergy is well illustrated by a reference to Tyndale's Testament in a letter by R. Ridley, addressed to the chaplain of Arches. "By this translation," he writes, "shall we losse al thies christian wordes,—penance, charite, confession, grace, prest, chirche, which he alway calleth congregation. . . . Ye shal not neede to accuse this translation, it is accused & damned by the consent of the prelates & learned men and commanded to be brynt both heir & beyonde the see."¹⁴

The "prelates and learned men" certainly did take strong exception to the loss of the old words, and they were so far right. Tyndale showed lack of literary feeling as well as small appreciation of the historic continuity of the Christian church in lightly throwing aside terms which had received the sanction of generations.

Another point of objection lay in the prologues and explanatory notes that formed rather a prominent part

¹⁴ *Records of the English Bible: The Documents Relating to the Translation and Publication of the Bible in English, 1525-1611*, ed. by A. W. Pollard, pp. 124, 125.

of the Tyndale Testament. Here, again, Tyndale was not without fault. His notes, if intended in the main simply to explain the text, were often biased and at times offensive. Commenting on Exodus 29:37 he adds: "Touch not the chalyce nor the altare stone, nor holy oyle and holde youre hande out off the fonte." On Exodus 36:5 he asks a question, and answers it as follows: "When wil the Pope saye hoo [hold], and forbid to offere for the bylding of saint peters chyrch: and when will our spiritualtie saye hoo, and forbid to geue them more londe, a[n]d to make moe fudacions? neuer verely untill they haue all."

Sir Thomas More probably expressed the mind of a number of the clergy when he asserted that he was not opposed to a vernacular Bible, but he did object to private and unauthorized translations. Such a work should, he thought, be taken in hand in times less stirred by religious dissension and by men of catholic minds.

On all three points—the retention of the old ecclesiastical words, the exclusion of notes, and the demand for an authorized version—the objectors to Tyndale's work were ultimately to have their way; though such was the general excellence of Tyndale's rendering that the so-called Authorized version, when it finally came out, was to embody by far the larger part of his translation.

Tyndale himself probably realized that he had made a mistake in rejecting the old terminology. In his final

version he employs quite generally the words *grace* and *confess*, but he holds out to the end against *church* and *charity*, which later hands were to restore, the latter, however, only in part.

Tyndale's New Testament had a considerable circulation even during the life of the author; but it was not given him to finish the work to which he had dedicated himself. Other men were to share with him the privilege of translating the Scriptures into modern English. In the year 1535 there appeared in England the first complete vernacular Bible since that of Wycliffe. It was the work of Miles Coverdale, who, in his own words, "with a clear conscience purely and faithfully translated out of five sundry interpreters." Scholars who have investigated the question believe these five interpreters to have been (1) the Swiss-German (or Zurich) Bible, by Zwingli and Leo Juda, completed in 1529; (2) Luther's German Bible; (3) the Vulgate; (4) the Latin Bible of 1528, by Pagninus, a Dominican monk; (5) some additional Latin or German version.

In translating the New Testament, Coverdale undoubtedly used Tyndale's version as a basis, introducing some valuable improvements in the diction and also strengthening the rhythm. In the Old Testament, as Dr. Westcott has pointed out, he placed chief reliance on the Zurich version.

The next complete copy of the Scriptures, known as Matthew's Bible, appeared in 1537. It consisted of

Tyndale's revised New Testament of 1534, his translation of the Pentateuch, a new translation of the books from Joshua to Second Chronicles inclusive (believed to have been made by Tyndale during his last imprisonment), and Coverdale's rendering of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This Bible was edited by John Rogers, the friend and literary executor of Tyndale; and the "Thomas Matthew" of the title page may have been the name of an assistant, or merely a *nom de plume*. For Matthew's Bible, Thomas Cromwell, who had become the chief counselor of Henry VIII, after the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, obtained the royal warrant. It was accordingly, in a sense, the first authorized version.

Two years later, in 1539, the Great Bible, also known as Cromwell's, came from the press. This famous version, from which the translation of the psalms used in the *Book of Common Prayer* is taken, was edited by Miles Coverdale. He took Matthew's Bible as a basis, but made many changes, with a view to greater clearness and smoothness of expression, as well as increased accuracy. Since the preparation of Coverdale's Bible, issued in 1535, a new Latin version of the Old Testament had been published by Sebastian Munster, and this seems to have been a chief authority in the work of revision. The Great Bible is sometimes called "Cranmer's Bible"; but this is a mistake. It was promoted by Cromwell, and Coverdale did all the necessary editing. Cranmer had very little to do with it. Taverner's Bible,

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which also appeared in 1539, was a result of private enterprise. Richard Taverner, the author, was a layman and a lawyer, who had the reputation of being a good Greek scholar. It was his hope to improve upon previous translations by attaining to a greater degree of force and fervidness. Some of his renderings (for instance, "the Israel of God" and "the love of many shall wax cold") were happy ones. The version, however, follows Tyn-dale and Coverdale very closely on the whole, and its influence on subsequent translations is believed to be negligible.

CHAPTER III

The Genevan, Bishops', and Authorized Versions

The noblest and most enduring monument of Elizabethan prose is, of course, the Authorized Version of the Bible. The nature of the texts to be translated suppressed all tendency to wilful conceits; a substratum of simple English from the time of Wyclif's versions in Chaucer's day, and from Tyndale's learned rendering, was retained; the lofty poetry of the ancient prophets was echoed in English as stately, balanced and harmonious; and if it be said that the English does not represent "the speech" of any one age in the life of England, we may reply that the original texts also are the work of a thousand years in different languages.—ANDREW LANG, *History of English Literature From Beowulf to Swinburne*, 2d ed., rev., p. 282.

CHAPTER III

The Genevan, Bishops', and Authorized Versions

ALTHOUGH THE 1540 edition of the Great Bible contained a number of improvements, and slight changes occurred in subsequent editions, no thoroughgoing revision was made till some twenty years later. The Marian persecutions drove many cultured and scholarly Englishmen to various points on the Continent. In the late fifties a band of these exiles in Calvin's famous city began work upon what is known as the Genevan version, though it is sometimes popularly called the Breeches Bible, owing to its translation of Genesis 3:7.¹ The New Testament, chiefly the work of one man, William Whittingham, who became dean of Durham under Elizabeth, came out in 1557, but this, as well as the Old Testament, was worked over more or less in the two and a half years following; so that when the complete Genevan Bible appeared in 1560, it represented the best scholarship of the time, having received contributions from a number of different sources. Taking the Great Bible as a

¹ "They sewed figge tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches."

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starting point, its authors laboriously examined every passage in the light both of the meaning of the original and of the proprieties of the English tongue. They made many and drastic changes, the great majority of which were improvements. Beza's Latin Testament was one of the then recent authorities which they found helpful in getting at the sense of the original.

The Genevan Bible exhibits several features of special interest. It was the first version produced by a group of men working in collaboration. It represented a closer approach to the originals than any previous version. Moreover, although its notes reveal a strong Calvinistic bias, viewed as a translation it is remarkably impartial. It was the first English Bible to be divided into verses.

The aims of its authors, as Whittingham explains in the preface to his New Testament, were "the faithful rendering of the sentence [i.e., sense], the propriety of the words, and perspicuitie of the phrase." In finding words in English which, while being intelligible, are also marked by dignity and a fine sense of restraint, the makers of this version were especially successful. We owe to them that noble rendering of *Deity*, in the book of Daniel, as "the Ancient of Days," Coverdale's translation reading "the Old-Aged." They gave us also the beautiful rendering, "We are more than conquerors," for a passage which in earlier translations had read, "We overcome strongly." Coverdale's phrase, "the Comfort of all heathen," became in their hands, "the Desire of

all Nations." Sometimes, however, in their striving after dignity they lost color and picturesqueness. Thus Coverdale's fine rendering, "Man goeth to his long home," was changed by them to read, "Man goeth to the house of his age."

The names of all the men who took part in this translation are not known, but Whittingham evidently did the greater share of the work. John Knox was in Geneva at the time, and probably bore a part. And Coverdale, the veteran translator and reviser, who, in his own words, was "always ready and willing to do my best as well in one translation as another," was able to give valuable assistance while the work was under way, though he left Geneva before it was ready for the press.

Coverdale thus rounded out a full quarter of a century's service in Bible translation. He was not cast in the heroic mold of a Tyndale or a Wycliffe, and he lacked the broad scholarship of these men; but he had what was perhaps equally important for the work in hand, a sure feeling for the beautiful and picturesque in language and a positive genius for the coining of melodious phrases.

His influence on the English of the Bible has, in the opinion of H. W. Hoare, author of one of our best works on the history of the Bible, been "great and enduring." "Not," to quote further from the same authority, "that we can lay our hand on many passages of any considerable length in which his renderings have re-

mained up till now untouched. It is rather that, for page after page, in some subtle way, in a cadence here, and a happy rendering there, the spirit and genius of this gifted literary artist make themselves continually felt.”² As a matter of fact Coverdale struck off, as it were at white heat, some very fine passages in his first translation, as in the following verses taken from the nineteenth psalm:

“The very heave[n]s declare the glory of God,
a[n]d the very firmamet sheweth his hadye worke.”
“The feare of the Lorde is cleane, & endureth for euer:
the judgmentes of the Lorde are true and rightuous all-
together.”

For the most part, however, he greatly improves his work in the successive revisions. In passing from Coverdale’s first version to the Genevan, one cannot but feel that a marked advancement has been made in the development of a sacred dialect. Weight, dignity, a certain aloofness from the language of ordinary life, and an almost liturgical stateliness are the qualities evidently aimed at in those passages of Holy Writ where the content demands it. The opening verses of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah may be taken as an illustration. This is Coverdale’s rendering:

“Be of good cheere my people, be of good chere
(saieth youre God) Comforte Jerusalem, and tell her:
that hir trauale is at an ende, that hir offence is pardoned,

² Hoare, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 178.

that she hath receaved of the Lordes honde sufficient correction for all hir synnes."

The Genevan version reads: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, will your God say. Speake comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lords hand double for all her sins."

There is an everyday familiarity about such phrases as "tell her" and "sufficient correction"; but the Genevan rendering is in the lofty style.

Coverdale, with his wide sympathies and somewhat yielding nature, offered no such violent opposition to medievalism as did Tyndale. He could understand the affection felt for the old ecclesiastical terms, and he humored it even to the extent on a few occasions of using such a word as *penance*. He also in some instances restored the renderings of Wycliffe, and in general showed great regard for the Vulgate, which Tyndale had largely ignored. Thus Coverdale's influence was in a considerable degree conservative. He and his collaborators of the Genevan version were instrumental in correcting the too democratic tendencies of Tyndale. The stream had temporarily turned aside from its main course; they brought it back.

The trend of the Genevan translators toward the utmost literalism in rendering the original language, especially in the Psalms and the prophets, where they made the most changes in the preceding versions, was in

itself a powerful means of enhancing the Oriental richness of the sacred dialect, and at the same time giving it a reposeful simplicity. The skill with which the Hebrew idioms are reproduced without doing violence to the essential genius of the English language is noteworthy.

Although the Genevan version proved more popular in England than any of its predecessors, no less than sixty editions coming out during the reign of Elizabeth, it was not wholly satisfactory. The notes were decidedly Calvinistic in tone, and some of the renderings were objectionable for one reason or another. Archbishop Parker accordingly set on foot plans for a new revision to be made by a committee of divines. It was published in 1568, some four years having been devoted to its preparation. A few of the rules adopted for the guidance of these revisers may be of interest:

The Great Bible was to be followed except where it manifestly departed from the originals.

The Latin versions of Munster and Paginus were to be used as helps.

"Bitter notes" were to be avoided, also "determination in places of controversy."

Language that offended good taste was to be replaced with "more convenient terms and phrases."

These rules made for a version which should keep in the middle of the road. Controversial matter was ruled out. Passages which in the original were not determinate were to be left thus in the translation. The expression

"more convenient terms and phrases" is a suggestive one. It was carried out chiefly by borrowing freely from the Genevan version. This Bishops' Bible, as it came to be known, because of the authors who can be identified with certainty eight were bishops, also made some improvements of its own. Its translation of the New Testament, especially, shows critical ability and a good grasp of the problems involved. It is, however, a work of uneven merit. It was printed in large folio, and its unwieldy size was a hindrance in the way of a wide circulation.

In 1582 there appeared what is known as the Rheims New Testament. It is not in the regular succession of translations that are being considered. It was prepared by Roman Catholic refugees at Rheims, in northern France, and never attained any considerable circulation among English Protestants. Nevertheless it is of interest as making a definite contribution to the style of the Authorized version. Gregory Martin, a former fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, was the translator. He later produced at Douay a rendering of the Old Testament as well; but it was not published till 1609-10, and probably had no influence on the style of our English Bible. The two together, with some later emendations, form the well-known Douay version, which is in regular use among English-speaking Roman Catholics.

The Rheims translation was made from the Vulgate, which was rendered word for word as far as possible,

even to the overstepping of the bounds of good English. All words, moreover, which were thought to possess a specific theological meaning, were given in their original Latin form, or only slightly Anglicized. The following are fair examples: "It behoueth therefore a Bishop to be irreprehensible." 1 Timothy 3:2. "In feare conuerse ye the time of your peregrination." 1 Peter 1:17. "To day if ye shal heare his voice: doe not obdurate your hartes." 1 Hebrews 4:7. "Therefore coming into the vworld he saith: Host and oblation thou vvouldest not: but a body hast thou fitted to me: Holocaustes and for sinne did not please thee." Hebrews 10:5, 6.³

These examples of the style of the Rheims New Testament give some idea of the general run of the language; but they do not show forth the peculiar excellences of some of the renderings. Martin's almost slavish adherence to the Vulgate, while it was on the whole a serious drawback, resulted at times in the attainment of renderings marked by enviable conciseness and by a certain distinction of manner. One example may be given.

Tyndale and his successors had translated Luke 12:27 in this way: "I saye unto you, that Salomon in all his royalty was not clothed lyke to one of these." It is

³ It is only fair to say that the Douay version of the Bible has undergone various revisions, chiefly in the direction of following many of the readings of the Authorized version. In its present form it is largely free from the Latinisms that were such a prominent feature of the early editions.

a correct rendering, but without distinction. Note the different complexion of the verse as we have it in our Authorized version: "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The change has been effected by the introduction of the words "glory" and "arrayed," which were taken from the Rheims version. This latter rendering represents the Biblical dialect at its best. A number of similar instances might be given from which it would clearly appear that the Rheims version had a decided influence on the shaping of Biblical prose as we know it.

We have now come to the crowning achievement in the history of our English Bible—the preparation of the Authorized version. Of the versions hitherto noticed, each was in essentials an improvement over the one which preceded it, though for the most part marred by some unfortunate renderings peculiar to itself. The makers of the Authorized version not only took a long step in advance of the immediately preceding version, but also gathered up in addition many of the sacred felicities which had somehow dropped out by the way, going back in numerous instances to Wycliffe. They also strengthened and enriched the sacred dialect by a judicious infusion of Latinate words, taken from the Rheims Testament, and in some cases they further enhanced the unique quality of Biblical prose by the deliberate introduction of archaisms.

The exceptional success which attended this trans-

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lation may be attributed to three outstanding facts: 1. The peculiar richness and vitality of the English language in the late Elizabethan period. The air was instinct with poetry and romance; great deeds were doing, and great literature was in the making. It was every way a most opportune time for giving final form to the book which in its bold imagery, its stirring battle scenes, its strong, virile characters, partook largely of the spirit of Elizabethan times. 2. The committee in charge of the work was larger and more representative than any previous committee. 3. The work was particularly well organized, and was characterized by a rare degree of thoroughness and resourcefulness.

It must also be remembered that this committee of final revision had its work done for it in a sense true of no other committee. The materials were practically all at hand. It was largely a matter of selection and combination. The pattern, moreover, for the first time seems to have been clearly outlined in the minds of the translators. Their selective power was marvelous, and the range immense. Latin, French, German, Italian, and Spanish versions were drawn upon for felicitous renderings, besides all the previous English versions.

The historical development should not be overlooked. The Reformation in England had a natural growth. These translators of the Authorized version were the instruments of the English people, who, having asserted themselves as a nation, having established what

was the equivalent of a political constitution, a national church, and a great national literature, now turned to the book which was the charter of their spiritual liberty, and brought it, as a literary work and a sound translation of a great world classic, fully up to Elizabethan standards.

Like many other very important undertakings, the Authorized version had its rise in circumstances that on the face of them appear to be accidental. The conference held at Hampton Court in January, 1604, was called to consider a petition presented by the Puritan section of the Anglican church, asking among other things that the church service as outlined in the Prayer Book might be purified by the elimination of what Puritans considered superstitious rites and ceremonies, such as the sign of the cross in baptism and the marriage ring.

The need of a new version of the Bible was not broached till the second day, when, the prospects for a favorable consideration of their petition being very poor, the Puritans, according to the preface of the Authorized version, "had recourse at the last to this shift, that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the Communion book [i.e., the Prayer Book], since it maintained the Bible as it was there translated, which was, as they said, a most corrupted translation."

The examples of mistranslation cited by the Puritan spokesman, Dr. John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, were taken from the Great Bible and the Bishops' Bible, the Genevan version

giving the passages correctly. Nevertheless this complaint met with a ready hearing. James expressed his dissatisfaction with the versions then current, and his wish that one uniform translation might be made by the most learned men in the universities, to be reviewed by the bishops and the Privy Council, and finally ratified by the royal authority, and "so this whole church to be bound unto it and none other."⁴ He was particular to add that the new version was to contain no marginal notes, because he had found some in the Genevan version "savoring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits."⁵

The time was ripe for such an undertaking. There had been many expressions of the need of a uniform Bible. A resolution on the subject had even come before the House of Lords, but had not been acted upon. The idea, moreover, made a strong appeal to James, who was nothing if not a theologian. It was accordingly not long before the new project was under way. The plan was to have fifty-four men acting on six committees, but only forty-seven took part in the work. Of these all but one were clergymen, a fact which undoubtedly had its bearing on the regard which the committee paid to the proprieties of the sacred dialect. The rules laid down for the guidance of the translators were as follows:

"1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, com-

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁵ *Ibid.*

monly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.

"2. The names of the prophets and the holy writers with the other names of the text to be retained as nigh as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.

"3. The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, viz., the word *Church* not to be translated *Congregation*, etc.

"4. When a word hath divers significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the ancient fathers, heing agreeable to the propriety of the place and the analogy of the faith.

"5. The division of the chapters to be altered either not at all or as little as may be, if necessity so require.

"6. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words which cannot, without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text.

"7. Such quotations of places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit reference of one Scripture to another.

"8. Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters; and having translated or amended them severally by himself where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their parts what shall stand.

"9. As any one company hath dispatched any one book in this manner, they shall send it to the rest to be

considered of seriously and judiciously, for his majesty is very careful in this point.

“10. If any company, upon the review of the book so sent, doubt or differ upon any place, to send them word thereof, note the place, and withal send the reasons; to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting, which is to be of the chief persons of each company at the end of the work.

“11. When any place of special obscurity is doubted of, letters to be directed by authority to send to any learned man in the land for his judgment of such a place.

“12. Letters to be sent from every bishop to the rest of his clergy, admonishing them of this translation in hand, and to move and charge as many as being skilful in the tongues and having taken pains in that kind, to send his particular observations to the company either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.

“13. The directors in each company to be the Deans of Westminster and Chester for that place; and the king's professors in the Hebrew or Greek in either university.

“14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible: viz. Tindale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's (i.e. the Great Bible), Geneva.

“15. Besides the said directors before mentioned, three or four of the most ancient and grave divines in either of the universities, not employed in translation,

to be assigned by the Vice-Chancellor upon conference with the rest of the Heads to be overseers of the translations, as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the fourth rule above specified." "

The reader cannot but be impressed with the thoroughgoing character of these instructions. Let us consider a few of them, and see how far they were intended to operate in the direction of preserving a special dialect.

1. The Bishops' Bible is to be followed in the main. In other words there is to be no break with the past.

2. Long-sanctioned custom is to decide as to the form in which the names of the prophets and holy writers are to appear.

3. The old ecclesiastical words are to be retained. There are to be no innovations such as Tyndale had brought in.

4. The authority of "ancient and grave divines" is to determine the sense in which important words are to be used. This stipulation is regarded of such importance that a special committee is provided by rule 15 whose duty it shall be to make sure that rule 4 will be properly observed.

Is it not somewhat striking that every regulation having a direct bearing on style should be couched in terms of the strictest conservatism, fairly redolent of the medieval regard for what is old and reverend? If instruc-

* Westcott, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-116.

tions were given in so many words to the effect that the Bible was supposed to be written in a certain dialect befitting devotion, and no changes could be allowed which would introduce an extraneous or discordant element, or in any way rob the language of its old-time atmosphere, the matter could hardly have been guarded more carefully.

Attention may also be called to the provisions laid down for revision of the work of the translators with a view to having every detail considered with care by each of the six working groups. The individual translator first read his rendering of a certain passage aloud before the members of his own committee; their approval given, it was submitted in turn to the other five committees, before whom it was also read aloud, and finally it received the consideration of the London committee of revision. No doubt these successive readings aloud in part account for the fact that in harmony and rhythms, unobtrusive alliteration and assonance, and all the other subtle touches which make for sheer beauty of language, the Authorized version represents a great advance over other versions.

Rules are of little use unless they are wisely carried out. There is reason to be grateful to the makers of the Authorized version for the excellent common sense they showed in this matter. They followed the spirit rather than the letter of some of the rules. The Genevan being on the whole a better version than the Bishops', they

practically took it for their working basis. Moreover, they made considerable use of the Rheims Testament, although it was not referred to in the instructions. They also made wise use of Wycliffe's translation, thus obeying the spirit of the instructions which threw emphasis on the value of what was ancient.

The style was intended to represent a compromise. As the translators put it in the preface: "We have, on the one side, avoided the scrupulousity of the Puritans who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *baptism*, and *congregation* instead of *church*; as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, . . . that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof it may be kept from being understood. But we desire that the Scripture . . . may be understood even of the very vulgar."⁷

In order to make sure of perfect intelligibility, the committee even modernized slightly in some few cases; but in more cases, in order to maintain the ancient atmosphere, they seem to have chosen an older form, subject of course to its being likely to be understood.

Particular features of the Authorized version will be treated in the following chapters; but it may be well at this point to give some slight idea of the kind of selection

⁷ Samuel Newth, *Lectures on Bible Revision, With an Appendix Containing the Prefaces to the Chief Historical Editions of the English Bible*, pp. 232, 233.

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exercised by the King James revisers; also a glimpse of the labors of the men who preceded them. For this purpose we shall give the twenty-third psalm in three successive versions.

Here are the Coverdale and Genevan translations in parallel lines for comparison, the Coverdale in Roman type, the Genevan changes in italics:

. I shall not wante. He
The Lorde is my shepherde, I can wante nothing. He
maketh me to rest in grene pasture, . . . by the still
fedeth me in a grene pasture, and ledeth me by a fresh
waters. He restoreth leadeth me in
water. He quickeneth my soule & bringeth me forth in
the paths of righteousness Yea, though
the waye of rightuousness for his names sake. Though
. . . walk through the valley
I shulde walk now in the valley of the shadowe of
. . . I will feare thy
death, yet I feare no euell, for thou art with me: thy
rod & thy staffe they Thou dost prepare
staffe & thy shepchoke comfort me. Thou preparest a
. . in the sight of mine adversaries: thou dost anoynt
table before me agynst mine enemies: thou anoyntest
. & my cuppe runneth over. Doubtless
my heade with oyle, & fyllest my cuppe full. Oh let thy
. kyndnes & mercy shall folowe
louynge kyndnes & mercy folowe me all the dayes off

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. . . and I shall remain a long season in the house
my life, that I may dwell in the house of the Lorde
of the Lorde.
for euer.

Compare now the Genevan version of the twenty-
third psalm with the King James translation. The King
James changes are found in italics:

-
1. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
. to lie down pastures
2. He maketh me to rest in greene pasture, he lead-
. beside
eth me by the still waters.
. he
3. He restoreth my soule, and leadeth me in the
.
paths of righteousness for his Names sake.
. though I walk
4. Yea, though I should walke through the valley
.
of the shadow of death, I will fear no euill: for thou art
.
with me: thy rod and thy staffe, they comfort me.
. preparest presence
5. Thou doest prepare a table before me in the sight
. enemies anointest my
of mine adversaries; thou doest annoynt mine head with
oil; my over
oyle, and my cup runneth ouer.

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. . . Surely goodness
6. Doubtless, kindness and mercy shall follow me all
. dwell in the house
the dayes of my life, and I shall remaine a long season
of the Lord for ever.
in the house of the Lord.

Even a superficial examination of the three renderings bears witness to the good judgment and taste of the revisers in selecting the best elements of preceding versions, and then adding a few fine touches of their own. Concreteness, vividness, and beauty are evidently the things sought after, and there is a fine feeling for color in words. Omission of what is unnecessary to the thought is one of the effective means of heightening the style. How it improves the fourth verse to omit "should," and the fifth to leave out "doest" and "and"! The closing verse, which had been weakly handled by the Genevan translators, is skillfully restored.

Such, in brief, is the history of the English Bible. From time to time reference has been made to medievalism and modernism as the outstanding forces in the social, religious, and political life of England in the period being studied, and it has been shown to some extent how they manifested themselves in the working out of the successive versions. It may be well at this point to pass them in review in a somewhat more formal way. Under these two heads the main facts in the history of the development of the sacred dialect may be summed

up, grouping under modernism the things that operated to make our Bible a book for the common people, and under medievalism those influences which made for beauty and distinction in style.

Modernism

Medievalism

Hampole

Sought "criste and commun-este" words.

Also tried to find words "most lyche to the Latyn."

Wycliffe

Wrote in popular style to meet the needs of the people.

Previous translations, mainly word-for-word renderings, influenced Wycliffe toward a style modeled after the Vulgate.

Middle English, then in general use in large parts of the country, was lacking in refinement because undeveloped.

Wycliffe's scholasticism and his reverence for the Vulgate operated in the direction of dignity and restraint.

Tyndale

Renaissance spirit essentially modern and secular.

Tyndale's fine scholarship led him to seek the closest possible reproduction of the original.

Tyndale's strong reform tendencies, his desire to break with the past as something effete and irreclaimable.

His free use of notes and introductory matter enabled him to avoid paraphrasing the text, thus making for dignified brevity.

His clearly expressed desire

The influence of Wycliffe in

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to produce a translation which should be intelligible to the plowboy. determining Scripture phraseology.

The literary language of the day inclined towards simplicity, not differing greatly from the language of ordinary conversation. The language had taken on added breadth and refinement, and possessed a larger vocabulary of words suited to religious concepts. It also offered the choice between words with everyday associations and others having religious connotations.

NET RESULT

The production of a version whose style formed almost an equilibrium between the two tendencies, but went a little too far in the direction of modernism.

Coverdale

Lack of restraint and occasional lapses of judgment in the choice of words and phrases. The yielding character of the man and his sympathy with the past tended toward medievalism; likewise his feeling for melody and rhythm.

NET RESULT

A partial correcting of the undue modernism of Tyndale, including the restoration of all the old ecclesiastical words except *church*.

Genevan

Strong reform tendencies under the influence of Calvin and Knox. Extreme literalness of renderings.

Genevan, Bishops', and Authorized Versions

Belief in equality of all men before God.	The reformed church was taking permanent form; hence the increased feeling for ordered beauty and harmony.
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NET RESULT

A decided strengthening of the Hebrew element. Greater dignity, in some places at the expense of vividness. A more strongly marked rhythm.

Bishops'

The rising tide of democratic feeling which belonged to the century.	The demand for "more convenient" words and phrases.
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Undeterminate passages to be so left.

NET RESULT

This version seems to have had small influence in determining the style of the English Bible.

Authorized

Growing power of the Puritans, a people stern, unyielding, and with a fine contempt for matters of form.	Strong tendency to a literal rendering.
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Transfusion of Latin terms from the Rheims Testament.

Tyndale's rendering was ancient by this time, and was therefore retained in places where otherwise less simple words might have been used.	General feeling for poetry and rhythm that prevailed in the late Elizabethan period.
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Patronage of a king who was a firm believer in a national church, and bitterly opposed to Puritanism.

NET RESULT

The final perfection of the sacred dialect. A version in which

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elements that seriously marred the beauty of the dialect were once for all removed: one in which the changes were all or nearly all for good, and in the direction of giving to Biblical prose the unique character it is known to possess—of being intelligible without being commonplace; impressive, forceful, and of a noble beauty.

Viewed strictly from the point of view of style, modernism and medievalism are practically in equilibrium in the versions of Hampole and of Wycliffe, for both retained all the old ecclesiastical words and reproduced the Vulgate as nearly as possible word for word, at the same time using a vocabulary which would be intelligible to the common people.

Tyndale represented modernism in the ascendancy; but with Coverdale, who restored the old ecclesiastical words, medievalism begins to grow stronger. The Genevan and Bishops' versions have a tendency in the same direction, and the Authorized version, with its rich infusion of Latinate words from the Rheims Testament, fully offsets the strong democratic trend of Tyndale. In it the two contending forces may be said to be in equilibrium.

The fact that the English language developed in the main side by side with the sacred dialect, is of importance chiefly as giving freer scope for the interplay of the two main forces which determined the character of that dialect. These same forces were also at work in the development of the language used by the people at large. In Wycliffe's day French was still largely the

language of the court and of polite society, while Latin was the language of scholars. English was the medium of communication for the common people. It was something of an innovation for a scholar like Wycliffe to issue religious tracts in the vernacular. By Tyndale's time the language had grown in power and resourcefulness, but was still largely plebeian in character. It could do admirable work in simple narrative; it had not yet risen to the higher levels of literary prose.

During the Elizabethan period it received a large accession of elegance and beauty. Indeed so much material poured in that it lost its bearings for a time, and fairly rioted in the excess of beauty, to the loss of the more solid qualities. From being chiefly plebeian, it became strongly aristocratic. Court and society had suddenly awakened to the possibilities of the vernacular as an instrument of beauty, and reveled in euphuisms,⁸ written and oral. The artificial period was only temporary, however. Early in the seventeenth century we have Hooker and Bacon and Raleigh writing prose which, at its best, has never been surpassed.

To be sure, Elizabethan prose was even in the hands of the masters a somewhat uneven performance. The sentence structure was often imperfect, and the choice of words a little uncertain. The prose of the Authorized version is practically free from these prevailing faults. Based largely on previous versions, and influenced

⁸ See pages 125-129 for examples of euphuism.

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strongly by the stern simplicity of the great originals, it was not subject to the extravagances of the age. Consequently it could and did reach perfection at a period earlier than literary prose, considered as a whole.

CHAPTER IV

Tyndale and the Authorized Version

The deeper we go into the history of the English language and literature the more distinctly are we aware of an influence that is moralizing words, refining expression, and creating discriminations in speech, which, while they represent the judgment of the mind, tend also to react upon that judgment and to establish it more firmly than before. This influence, beyond all question, is the English Bible. Think of how it has caused such words as RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, PURITY, HONESTY, OBEDIENCE, SINCERITY, REVERENCE, WORSHIP, HOPE, FAITH, LOVE, to obtain currency in English speech. Think of how it has put upon the tongues of men phrases and expressions that have become rubrics of mental and moral force. Think of how it has magnified the importance of language as a factor in life, and how it has established a barrier against the thousand "peering littlenesses" and trivialities of speech, furnishing instead a magnificent language vista for the mind. Think in short of how it has enriched, enlarged, and diversified the power of expression, lifting it ever to higher levels, giving it a wider outlook, and filling it with the reverberations of an unworldly power and grace.—EDGAR WHITAKER WORK, *The Bible in English Literature*, p. 28.

CHAPTER IV

Tyndale and the Authorized Version

THE EXTERNAL HISTORY of the sacred dialect has been recounted in the preceding chapters. It remains to consider the growth of that dialect from within; to trace the main lines of its development as recorded in the successive translations and revisions which have come down to us.

In this study of the various texts, it may be well, first, to make a direct comparison of the version of Tyndale (and to a less degree that of Coverdale) with the Authorized version in respect to certain outstanding qualities of Biblical prose. These qualities (which have been chosen, not because they are necessarily the most characteristic, but because they seem to afford a fairly satisfactory basis for a comparison of the two texts), may be named (1) simplicity, (2) intelligibility, (3) concreteness, (4) aptness of word and phrase, (5) the foreign element, (6) the archaic element, (7) the note of dignity and restraint, (8) terseness, (9) sonorousness, and (10) rhythm.

Naturally the mere possession of the foregoing qualities would not in itself suffice to distinguish Biblical prose; it is the possession of them in a certain proportion

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that gives to the sacred dialect its unique character.

Simplicity as a differentiating quality of style lies under the disadvantage of being somewhat vague; of meaning too much or too little, according to the reader's sense of values. It is in fact a sort of omnibus term, carrying a large assortment of meanings and connotations, some of them contradictory. It is used here as signifying the power of eliminating all that savors of affectation or of mere artistry in words, and of clothing great themes in such language that they will seem to stand out in their naked majesty; in other words, a kind of art which transcends art, and seems wholly unconscious—nature at first hand.

This quality the Hebrew and Greek originals possess in a marked degree, so that it would be hard for the conscientious translator, provided he is at all skilled in the use of language, to avoid in some measure reproducing it in his rendering. Tyndale was a great translator, and both in his translation of the Bible and in his original writings, he attained a degree of simplicity; but he fell short of the simplicity of the Authorized version.

Very numerous are the instances in Tyndale where the simple and obvious word has been overlooked in favor of expressions that seem either affected or unnecessarily bookish. The Authorized rendering of Luke 17: 34 reads: "In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." Tyndale translated the passage thus: "In that night there

shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be received, and the other shall be forsaken." Again, in 1 Corinthians 14:9 his "words that have signification" appears in the Authorized version as "words easy to be understood." In Matthew 9:18, Tyndale's "My daughter is deceased" becomes in the Authorized version, "My daughter is . . . dead."

Sometimes Tyndale's departure from simplicity seems to arise from a desire that the reader shall be duly impressed. Thus in the verse: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10), he inserts "yet" at the beginning of the last clause, thus destroying the fine simplicity of the original. There is nothing in the Greek to suggest the addition, and Tyndale alone of the leading translators had the hardihood to insert the wholly unnecessary word.

In a number of places Tyndale is betrayed into a species of affectation in order to avoid what he evidently thought would be an unpleasant repetition of the same word or construction. The last part of Matthew 6:25 reads in the Authorized version: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Tyndale renders it, "Is not the lyfe more worth than meate, and the body more of value than rayment?" Matthew 22:14 he renders: "For many are called, but few be chosen," the Authorized version of course using *are* in both clauses.

Here are Tyndale's renderings of two familiar scrip-

tures: "Geve to every man therfore his duetie: Tribute to whom tribute belongeth: custom to whom custom is due: feare to whom feare belongeth: Honoure to whom honoure pertayneth." "Geve then unto Cesar that which belongeth unto Cesar: and to God that which pertayneth to God." In the Authorized version the verses are rendered thus: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

From these and a score of similar passages that could be cited, two facts become evident: First, that Tyndale was a conscious literary workman. Second, that his literary workmanship at times came short of that highest art which conceals art. It goes without saying that every practiced writer avoids unpleasant repetitions of words and constructions; but he aims to do so in a way not to attract notice. When his reader discovers that he has gone out of his way to escape repeating a word, the effect is lost.

Repetition in some instances is not only allowable, but is an element of power: "He that is unjust," reads the Authorized version, "let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." The sameness of construction in this translation, which is a straightforward rendering of

the Greek, gives the passage a solemnity and impressiveness like that of a stately ritual. Tyndale failed to perceive this, and endeavored in his rendering to break the monotony. His rendering reads: "He that doeth evyl, let him do evyl still: and he which is fylthy, let him be fylthy still: and he that is righteous let him be more righteous: and he that is holy, let him be more holy." Matthew 24:35 affords another instance of impressive repetition. The Authorized version reads: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Tyndale's rendering is, "Heaven and earth shall perisshe, but my wordes shall abyde."

Intelligibility as a quality of style is an outgrowth of the modernizing tendency, and is prominent in Tyndale's version. He was writing a translation which was to reach the plowboy, and he wanted to make sure that the plowboy would understand every word. So he sometimes indulged in paraphrase. For "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" of our present version, he substitutes "are such that it cannot repent him of them." Philippians 3:1, which reads, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous," was rendered by Tyndale, "It greveth me not to write one thinge often to you." "A night and a day I have been in the deep," becomes in Tyndale's hands, "I have been in the deep of the sea." "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" is not sufficiently clear; it must be "received I every tyme forty strypes saue one."

This tendency of Tyndale's to leave extremely little to the intelligence of his reader would undoubtedly have shown itself in a more frequent use of the paraphrase had it not spent itself largely on the copious notes with which his Testament was furnished. Intelligibility is a strong element in the Authorized version, but it is there kept within bounds. Its translators assume in the reader an average amount of intelligence. Thus it gains in dignity and terseness.

The beauty of Biblical prose, as well as its vividness and force, is largely bound up with its concreteness. This quality is also prominent in the earlier versions by Tyndale and Coverdale; but in them it is often carried to such lengths as to interfere with the principle of dignity and restraint, which is so essential a part of the sacred dialect. Their concreteness, moreover, is often an outgrowth of the poverty of the English language when in a comparatively undeveloped state, while the concreteness of the Authorized version is chiefly a result of rendering the original Hebrew or Greek word for word. The effect of the latter course has naturally been to heighten the distinctive character of the sacred dialect.

A few examples will make the matter clear. Tyndale translated 2 Thessalonians 1:3 in this way: "We are bounde to thanke God all wayes for you brethren as it is mete, because that youre fayth groweth excedyngly, and every one of you swymmeth in love toward another hetwene youre selves." Here Tyndale's figurative lan-

guage seems to spring from his intense nature, and it is reminiscent of similar expressions in his original works; but it is not in keeping with the dignity of the sacred dialect. The rendering of the Authorized version is, "The charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage," is the Authorized version rendering of 1 Peter 5:3. Tyndale translates the passage, "Not as though ye were lords over the parishes." Probably the translator's zeal as a Reformer led him to give this verse a local coloring. In 1 Peter 4:12 we find another characteristic example. "Dearly beloved," writes Tyndale, "be not troubled in this heate, which now is come amonge you to trye you." The Authorized reading is: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." Tyndale is unnecessarily concrete also in Colossians 2:18, which he renders: "Let no man make you shote at a wronge (marke)," the Authorized reading, "Let no man beguile you of your reward."

The Old Testament examples are numerous; but only two will be cited. The Authorized rendering of Deuteronomy 33:10 reads: "They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar." Tyndale's rendering of the first clause reads: "They shall put incense before thy nose," which is true enough to the original, but offends us by its literalness. In Judges 5:12 Tyndale gives us the vivid but very undignified transla-

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tion: "Catch him that catcheth thee," which in our well-known version reads: "Lead thy captivity captive."

The Authorized version does more, however, than correct and modify the excess of concreteness in the earlier versions. In many places it substitutes concrete expressions for their more or less abstract ones, oftentimes to the great improvement of the style. If we take the passage: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest," how quickly the beauty fades if, adopting Tyndale's reading we substitute "regions" for "fields." It seems strange that a man possessed of the literary instinct should turn away from the obvious rendering (Wycliffe translated it "fields"); but Tyndale probably used the less fortunate word in order to convey the thought that what the Saviour had in mind was the regions of the earth waiting for the gospel message, and not merely fields of wheat or barley.

Again, in Matthew 25:35, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in," is a great improvement over the earlier reading, "I was herbourless, and ye lodged me." And "We know in part, and we prophesy in part," is far preferable to Tyndale's "Our knowledge is unperfect, and our prophesying is unperfect." Let us take one example from the Old Testament. Coverdale renders Job 32:7: "I thought thus within myself: It becometh olde men to speake and the aged to teach wyszdome." The Authorized reads: "I said, Days should speak, and

multitude of years should teach wisdom." The improvement in vividness and force is self-evident.

Aptness of word and phrase is well known to be a marked feature of the Authorized version. This is owing in part to the excellent taste of the authors of the King James version, and in part to the growth of the English language. It had reached backward as well as forward, gathering up the forgotten treasures of the past, and laying particularly the Latin and French languages under contribution for new accessions. The era was one of travel and adventure; new ideas of many kinds struggled for expression as the state, the national church, and society adjusted themselves to the new conditions. The poets of the age had their share in enriching the language. In the creation of those remarkable dramas which stand supreme in the whole world of literature, the crude product pouring in from all sides could be refined and purified. With the birth of a great literature the country had for the first time come into full possession of its language, and realized its power and its scope.

Many of the deficiencies of Tyndale's version undoubtedly spring from the poverty of the vocabulary of his day. It was not always that certain words were not in existence, but they were not sufficiently well known to allow of their being used in a people's Bible. Thus in Romans 5:8 Tyndale wrote: "God setteth out his love that he hath to us." The Authorized reading is, "God commendeth his love towards us." Tyndale's rendering

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of Romans 8:29, 30 follows: "For those which he knewe before, he also ordeyned before, that they should be like fassioned unto the shape of his sonne, that he might be the fyrst begotten sonne amonge many brethren. Moreover which he apoynted before, them he also called." The Authorized reads: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called."

Here are a few more examples: Tyndale: "That I may open my mouth boldly to utter the secrets of the gospel, whereof I am a messenger in bonds." Ephesians 6:19. Authorized: "That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds."

Tyndale: "All things that I have hearde of my father, I have opened to you." John 15:14. In the Authorized "made known" takes the place of "opened."

Tyndale: "I beseech you by the meekness and softness of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:1. Authorized: "Gentleness" replaces "softness."

Tyndale: "As a bride garneshed for her husband." Revelation 21:2. In the Authorized the bride is "adorned."

Tyndale: "I do not despise the grace of God." Galatians 2:21. Authorized: "Frustrate."

In most of the following examples the earlier version

shows lack of accuracy; in some the later rendering is simply more felicitous.

Tyndale: "I also myself am a man under power."
Matthew 8:9. Authorized: "Under authority."

Tyndale: "His disciples came vnto hym secretly."
Matthew 24:3. Authorized: "Privately."

Tyndale: "Then came he to his disciples and sayd vnto them: Slepe hence forth and take youre rest."
Matthew 26:45. Authorized: "Sleep on now."

Tyndale: "Ther arose a *grudge* amonge the Grekes agaynst the Ebrues because their wyddowes were *despysed* in the dayly mynystracion." Acts 6:1. Authorized: The words are "murmuring" and "neglected."

Tyndale: "When I sawe that they went not the ryght way after the trueth of the gospel." Galatians 2:14. Authorized: "Walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel."

Tyndale: "He is a Jewe which is hid wythin." Romans 2:29. Authorized: "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly."

Tyndale: "My father also will love him, and we will come unto him, and will dwell with him." John 14:23. Authorized: "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The foregoing examples illustrating the superiority of the Authorized over previous versions from the point of view of the vocabulary, may be taken as representative of a host of similar ones. In fact, it is difficult to find a

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passage of half a dozen lines which does not offer material for such comparison.

Under the foreign element in Biblical prose it is proposed to consider that peculiar flavor which it possesses by virtue of its being largely a word-for-word translation from the Hebrew and Greek originals. It is a strongly marked note of individuality amounting almost to mannerism; it is English and it is not English; it is (or at least was) foreign to the English language yet not foreign to the sacred dialect, of which it is one of the distinguishing features.

The main source of this element of strangeness, and therefore of perennial freshness, is of course the Hebrew. The subsidiary sources are the Latin and Greek; there are also little streams trickling in from other languages, notably the German, which has given us "good courage," as a rendering of its "gutes muthes." The Hebrew is, however, the overshadowing influence, the other foreign idioms which have been introduced having usually had their source in the efforts of other languages to reproduce Hebrew thought.

Many of the finest passages in the English Bible owe much of their impressiveness to being closely modeled upon the original. Tyndale himself translated word for word to a considerable extent; but he lived too near the initial stage of Bible translation to understand either the full requirements of the sacred dialect or the possibilities of the English language. He translated

Romans 11:33: "O the depnes of the abundant wysdome and knowledge of God." The rendering is fairly accurate, but how lame compared with the more literal rendering of the Authorized version: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowlledge of God!" Again, he translated Matthew 13:46: "When he had founde one precious pearle, went and solde all that he had and bought it." In the Authorized rendering we have the beautiful Hebraism: "One pearl of great price." How much more impressive, too, is the Authorized rendering, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," as compared with Tyndale's phrase "A cryar in the wylder-ness." "Great Babilon is fallen, is fallen" is good; but how much better is the rendering, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Tyndale's rendering of Hebrews 1:8 reads: "But unto the sonne he sayth: God thy seate shalbe forever and ever. The cepter of thy kyngdome is a right cepter." The Authorized, following closely the Greek, which is in the Hebrew idiom, renders it: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Needless to say, the two are far apart in point of beauty and impressiveness. How weak, too, is "lost child" when compared with "son of perdition," and "I sytt beinge a quene" compared with "I sit a queen."

There is a certain "linked sweetness long drawn out" in such typical Bible expressions as "the valley of the shadow of death," the "light of the knowledge of

the glory of God," "a pure river of water of life," and "the law of the spirit of life." Some of these expressions are in the earlier versions, but they are most typical of the Authorized version. There is one place where the tendency to a literal rendering is carried too far; namely in I Hebrews 4:3, 5, which reads in the Genevan, Rheims, and Authorized versions: "If they shall enter into my rest." The meaning is, "They shall not enter into my rest," and so Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Coverdale translated it. The example is of interest, however, as showing to what lengths the Authorized translation carried an essentially medieval principle.

An important element in the sacred dialect is the prevalence in it of slightly archaic forms of English. They are not sufficiently pronounced to be obtrusive or seriously to interfere with intelligibility; but they do lend additional charm and distinction to the style. Tyndale's translation shows some traces, but they are few. "Hallowed be thy name," in his rendering of the Lord's prayer is archaic. The Greek word there rendered "hallowed" is everywhere else in his New Testament rendered "sanctified." "Hallowed" is evidently retained in the prayer because it had been recited that way for two centuries. Tyndale was inclined to favor modern expressions. Thus he renders Revelation 17:6: "And I sawe the wyfe dronke with the bloud of sanctes," while the Authorized version goes back to Wycliffe and translates "the woman drunken," thus gaining in dignity. In vari-

ous instances it also follows Wycliffe in speaking of the people whom Christ healed as "made whole" in preference to Tyndale's "restored." Again, in 1 John 3:1 Tyndale translates: "Beholde what love the father hath shewed on us that we shuld be called the sonnes of god." But the translation with which we are best acquainted, following the Middle-English idiom of Wycliffe, renders it: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

It may be well to add in this connection that the prose of the Authorized version, as compared with Tyndale's exhibits some instances of judicious modernization in the interests of intelligibility. Thus Tyndale's rendering of 1 Corinthians 14:20, "Brethren be not Chyldren in witte," becomes in the other version "children in understanding." And in Acts 5:32, "We are his records" becomes "We are his witnesses." Also "A man's life standeth not in the aboundance of the thinges which he possesseth," is altered to read "consisteth not."

In its note of dignity and restraint the style of the Authorized version shows a marked superiority over the earlier translations. There is room for only a few examples. Tyndale's translation of Matthew 6:7 reads: "And when ye praye, babble not moche." The Authorized rendering is: "Use not vain repetitions." Again, Tyndale has Paul address the Roman governor as "Most dere

Festus," the Authorized as "most noble Festus." (Acts 26:25.) "Babes let not man deceave you," is Tyndale's translation of 1 John 3:7. The Authorized rendering is "little children," an expression which Tyndale himself used in places. The Reformer's occasional tendency to effusiveness led him to begin the Lord's prayer, "O our Father," thus detracting from its noble simplicity. There seems to be a distinct bid for the reader's sympathy in his rendering of John 19:24. After citing the scripture, "They parted my rayment amonge them, and on my coote dyd cast lottes," he adds: "And the soudiers dyd soch thinges in deed." The Authorized version reads: "These things therefore the soldiers did." Tyndale's rendering of Luke 12:20 is, "But God sayde unto him: Thou fole, this night will they fetch awaye thy soule agayne from the." The Authorized version reads: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

Coverdale's rendering of Psalms 116:15 is "Right deare in the sight of the Lorde is the death of his sayntes." The Authorized reads: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He translates Psalms 14:1 in these words: "The foolish bodyes saye in their hertes: Tush, there is no God." The King James reads: "The fool hath said in heart, There is no God."

The terseness of the prose of our Bible is less noticeable because it has none of that bareness which often results from the attempt to avoid unnecessary verbiage.

It is full, even to richness, but there is no surplusage. Its brevity is not the crowded compactness of Thucydides, the very words seeming to pant for air; rather, it is reposeful, elegant, and admirably simple. Tyndale is seldom verbose except when his earnest desire to be perfectly intelligible even to the most uneducated leads him to multiply words. A very few out of many examples will serve to illustrate the difference between him and the Authorized version.

Tyndale: "Ye . . . have youre frute that ye should be sanctified." Romans 6:22. Authorized version: "Your fruit unto holiness."

Tyndale: "We that are dead as touching sin." Authorized version: "Dead to sin."

Tyndale: "Scynge then that we knowe, how the Lord is to be feared, we fare fayre with men." 2 Corinthians 5:11. Authorized version: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

The musical qualities of Biblical prose, its sonorousness and rhythm, will be considered in part here and in part in the following chapter, in which the sacred dialect is studied in relation to Elizabethan poetry. The element of sonorousness, it must be allowed, proceeds in large part from the influence of the Vulgate, not only in furnishing many impressive, mouth-filling terms, but also in suggesting combinations of Anglo-Saxon words which seem to be the musical counterpart of the Latin. In all that makes for beauty of sound, the Authorized

version presents a great advance on previous versions. This becomes especially apparent when the test of reading aloud is applied. One or two examples of the wise introduction of Latinate words will have to suffice. Tyndale's translation of Luke 12:33 reads: "Where noo thefe cometh, neither moth corrupteth." The Authorized translation changes it to: "Where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." 1 John 4:10 reads in Tyndale's version: "He loved us, and sent his sonne to make agrement for our sinnes." In the Authorized the phrasing is, "Sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." Matthew 20:24 is rendered in the earlier version: "And when the ten hearde this, they disdayned at the two brethren." In the King James version the ten "were moved with indignation." "Whether they be maieste or Lordshippe, ether rule or power," is Tyndale's rendering of a portion of Colossians 1:16. It reads in the Authorized: "Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."

The Authorized version gains much in rhythm over the earlier versions from its greater accuracy in reproducing the exact order of the originals, and from the omission of words which a too curious regard for English idioms seemed to the early translators to be necessary. Tyndale translated Matthew 6:34: "For the day present hath ever ynough of his awne trouble." The Authorized version, following the exact order of the Greek, renders it: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Coverdale translated Isaiah 54:13: "Thy children shall be taught of God, and I wil geue the[m] plenteousness of peace." The Genevan version makes a closer approach to the original in the rendering: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and much peace shall be to thy children." But the Authorized version gives a rendering in which the accented syllables fall into the same places as in the Hebrew, thus preserving the exact pattern of the original so far as rhythm is concerned. It reads: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."

Before this chapter is brought to a close, it may be well to extend the comparison to larger portions of the text, and in doing so modernize the spelling of the earlier version in order that no apparent uncouthness in form may prejudice the reader in judging the style.

Tyndale is strong in narrative. His translation of the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the historical books of the Old Testament required comparatively few changes. As a fair specimen of his work, here is a passage from the second chapter of Luke, which has been corrected according to the Authorized version. Tyndale is here put into Roman type, and the changes of the Authorized version into italics:

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And there were in the same region shepherds abiding
. *keeping watch over their flock*
in the field, and watching their flock by night. And lo,

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. *came upon them* *glory*
the angel of the Lord stood hard by them, and the bright-
.
ness of the Lord shone round about them, and they were
. *And* *Fear not:*
sore afraid. But the angel said unto them, Be not afraid.
. *good tidings* *which shall*
For behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall
be to all
come to all the people; for unto you is born this day in
.
the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lorde.
And this shall be a sign unto you; *wrapped*
And take this for a sign; ye shall find the child swaddled
in swaddling clothes, lying *And suddenly*
and laid in a manger. And straightway there was with
. *of the heavenly host praising God*
the angel a multitude of heavenly soldiers, lauding God
. *in the highest, and on earth*
and saying: Glory to God on high, and peace on the
peace, good will toward men.
earth: and unto men rejoicing.

Extended comment is unnecessary; the changes speak for themselves. It should be remembered that this is a translation of a well-nigh perfect passage of Hellenistic Greek; that Tyndale's version here is more than sixty per cent Wycliffe's, and if allowance is made for the older forms in the language, the two translations

would make a much closer approach to each other. In the light of these facts small changes become important, and the delicate touches which have so much to do with style are correctly evaluated.

The substitution of "glory" for "brightness" and of "host" for "soldiers" helps greatly, it will be noticed, to give a distinctly Biblical atmosphere to the passage. "Keeping watch over" and "lying in a manger" are changes which show a delicate feeling for words; also the substitution of "fear not" for "be not afraid."

Following is Tyndale's translation of Romans 12: 9-13, corrected according to the Authorized changes which appear here in italics:

. *Abhor*
Let love be without dissimulation. Hate that which is
. *cleave to* *Be kindly af-*
evil, and cleave unto that which is good. Be kind one
fectioned *in honour preferring one*
to another with brotherly love. In giving honor go one
another; *not slothful in business;*
before another. Let not the business which ye have in
. *fervent in spirit; serving the*
hand be tedious to you. Be fervent in the spirit. Apply
Lord; *rejoicing in hope; patient in trib-*
yourselves to the time. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in
ulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing
tribulation. Continue in prayer. Distribute to the neces-

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. *given to hospitality.*
sity of the saints and diligently to harbour.

The thing which is most significant here is that the Authorized version, by following the original much more closely than Tyndale's, secured a larger harmony in the structure of the sentence and also greater conciseness. "Instant in prayer" is one of the felicities. The substitution of "abhor" for "hate" is a characteristic change.

Here is Tyndale's rendering of 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, with the changes of the Authorized version in italics:

. . . *glorying*
Your rejoicing is not good: know ye not that a little
. . . *leaveneth the whole lump?* *out* .
leaven sowereth the whole lump of dowe? Purge there-
. *a new lump,* . . .
fore the old leaven that ye may be a new dough as ye
. . . *unleavened. For even* . . . *passover* . . . *sacrificed*
are sweet bread. For Christ our Easter lamb is offered
. *the feast*
up for us. Therefore let us keep holy day, not with old
.
leaven, neither with the leaven of maliciousness and
. *unleavened* . . . *sincerity* . . .
wickedness, but with the sweet bread of pureness and
. . .
truth.

Tyndale's faults in the foregoing passage spring chiefly from want of taste. It is a case where, in the

bishop's own words, one wishes "more convenient terms and phrases."

As a final specimen we give Tyndale's rendering of 1 Corinthians 2:1-10, 13-15:

And I, brethren, with
And I brethren when I came to you, came not in
excellency of speech . . . wisdom, declaring
gloriousness of words or of wisdom showing unto you the
. *For I determined not to know any*
testimony of God. Neither showed I myself that I knew
thing and him cru-
anything among you save Jesus Christ even the same
cified with
that was crucified. And I was among you in weakness
.
and in fear and in much trembling. And my words and
.
my preaching were not with enticing words of men's
. *demonstration*
wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and of power,
.
that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men
.
but in the power of God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom
That we speak of is wisdom among them that are
. . . *yet not* *nor* . . .
perfect: not the wisdom of this world neither of the

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princes that come
rulers of this world (which go to nought) but we speak
. in a mystery, even the hidden
the wisdom of God, which is in secret and lieth hid,
wisdom, which
which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
which none of the princes of this world knew: for . . .
which wisdom none of the rulers of the world knew. For
.
had they known it they would not have crucified the
. written, Eye hath not seen, nor
Lord of glory. But as it is written: The eye hath not seen,
ear heard
and the ear hath not heard, neither have entered into
.
the heart of man the things which God hath prepared
.
for them that love him.

. revealed
But God hath opened them unto us by his spirit.
. deep things
For the spirit searcheth all things, yea the bottom of
of God
God's secrets . . . which things also we speak, not
. . . words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which
in the cunning words of man's wisdom, but with the
the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual
cunning words of the Holy Ghost, making spiritual com-

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things with spiritual. . . . But *re-*
parisons of spiritual things. For the natural man per-
ceiveth
ceiveth not the things of the spirit of God. For they are
are foolishness
but foolishness unto him. Neither can he perceive them,
. . . *they are* . . . *discerned*
because he is spiritually examined. But he that is spirit-
. . . *judgeth*
ual discusseth all things: yet he himself is judged of
. . .
no man.

The foregoing passage gives us a good all-round view of Tyndale as a translator. We see his strength and his weakness. The defects are characteristic: Poverty of words and lack of feeling for the proprieties of the sacred dialect. The verb "show" is made to do service in three places where the Authorized version uses "declare," "determine," and "demonstration." "Gloriousness of words," even if it were a correct rendering of the original, does not bear comparison with "excellency of speech"; and "revealed" is obviously an improvement on "opened," a favorite word with Tyndale.

The introduction of "howbeit" at the beginning of verse 6 supplies an important connective. In this welding together of parts closely related, the Authorized version is decidedly superior to all the preceding versions. "The

bottom of God's secrets," is wooden, and "the wisdom of God, which is in secret and lieth hid," is an example of Tyndale's extreme desire to be explicit. "Spiritually discerned" is characteristic of the fine word sense of the King James revisers, as "spiritually examined" and "discusseth" in this connection are examples of Tyndale's deficient feeling for words.

What shall be said of Tyndale's literary style in the light of these specimens? That it is on the whole a fairly good style, but much inferior to that of the Authorized version. In a later chapter dealing in general with the whole question of the nature and origin of the style of the Authorized version, attention will be given to the extent of Tyndale's indebtedness to Wycliffe.

CHAPTER V

Elizabethan Influences in the Formation of the Sacred Dialect

The picturesqueness of Scriptural language addresses the mind's eye; its simple, regular, natural harmony addresses the ear. Its harmony is simple, because it depends mainly on parallelism, or, as it has been called, antiphony; . . . it is regular, because the ear, when ever so little accustomed to it, knows just what to expect. The verses fall into a march tune; their movement is disciplinary, first of the emotions, and through them of life and conduct. It is natural, because the emphatic syllable of the word—and this alike in Hebrew and English—coincides with the natural stress of the rhythm, and both with the pulse of the thought itself.—*The Bible and English Prose Style*, edited, and with an introduction, by Albert S. Cook, p. XIX.

CHAPTER V

Elizabethan Influences in the Formation of the Sacred Dialect

THAT THE OUTPOURING of poetic genius which characterized the reign of Elizabeth should have had a powerful effect in increasing the opulence and strength of the English language as well as in making it a more refined and delicate instrument of thought, goes without saying, and the King James version, which was prepared toward the close of this notable period of literary activity, when Shakespeare was rounding out his life-work with "The Tempest" and "Cymbeline," represents to the full the exceptional powers of expression which the language had then attained. It is certainly Elizabethan in tone. Especially in the Psalms and the prophets do we recognize numerous instances of the intensity of thought, the feeling for the emotional power of words, the lightness of touch, the subtle alliteration and assonance, and fine poetic coloring which are so characteristic of the best work of that period.

Consideration will be given to only a few of the numerous instances where the reading of the Authorized version is greatly superior to that of any preceding ver-

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sion, judged from the point of view of poetic feeling and insight.

In our common version, 1 Kings 19:12 reads: "And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

Coverdale's translation was "a styll softe hyssinge." The Genevan, "a still, soft voice," which is at least not laughable, but certainly lacks the poetic quality of the Authorized rendering. Chaucer used the word "small" in this sense, but apparently it went out of use till Shakespeare and his contemporaries took it up again.

Tyndale rendered Romans 3:23: "For all have synned, and lacke the prayse that is of valoure before God." Coverdale: "Are destitute of the glorie of God." Genevan: The same. Rheims: "Doe need the glorie of God." Authorized: "Come short of the glory of God."

In Philippians 4:8 we have in the Authorized version the phrase, "whatsoever things are lovely." Tyndale had rendered it "whatsoever thynges pertayne to love"; Coverdale, "whatsoever thynges are conuenient"; the Rheims version, "whatsoever amiable." The Authorized rendering is rather significant, because the word "lovely" is not often used in this sense. It was used by Shakespeare: "Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!"¹ It would be hard to find a better example of the essential difference between the translation of Tyndale and the Authorized version, judged as literary

¹ "Henry VI," Part iii, Act ii, scene 5.

works, than in their respective renderings of this verse. "Whatsoever thynges pertayne to love," is about as near an approach to the Greek as the other, but how heavy and meaningless in comparison!

The Authorized version shows poetic feeling not only in the new renderings it contributes but also in the judicious manner in which it treads its way among the many versions, culling the best from each. This will appear again and again in the examples of the evolutionary process given in the following chapter.

So much emphasis is thrown upon the so-called simplicity of Biblical prose that the suggestion that it contains well-marked cases of euphuism is likely to call forth a decided negative. But the simplicity of the Bible, like that of Shakespeare, whom some eighteenth-century critics considered a wonderful child of nature, who only lacked art to make him a great poet, is not at bottom the childlike, utterly unconscious quality that it is sometimes taken to be.

There are, as a matter of fact, numerous cases of euphuism in the Bible, and some of the more marked instances were introduced by the King James revisers. They are not of the crude, highly artificial variety that prevails with such tedious monotony in Lyly's *Euphues*, but something very refined and delicate, which to the average reader does not suggest euphuism at all, but only a fortuitous combination of harmoniously beautiful sounds. Closer examination, however, reveals a struc-

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ture in all essentials euphuistic. The pattern is the same, only in the Bible, and one may say also in Shakespeare and other poets, it does not stand out in its bare anatomy, calling undue attention to itself, but is modified and subdued by other elements. The chief distinguishing feature of the euphuistic sentence, according to Landemann, who has treated the subject most fully, is cross alliteration, combined with antithesis, the emphases naturally falling on the words which contain the alliteration. Note the following example: "I am not a little glad that I shall have thee not only a comfort in my life, but also a companion in my love."

The English Bible being a translation, it naturally does not offer as free a field for indulgence in this kind of sentence structure as would an original work; nevertheless, in the Authorized version the instances are many.

Tyndale translated 2 Corinthians 10:3: "Nevertheless though we walke compassed with the fleshe, yet we warre not fleshlye." Later translators practically followed him till we come to the Authorized, which reads: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh," thus giving the sentence the typical form.

Tyndale, again, translated 2 Corinthians 10:10: "For the pistles (sayth he) are sore and stronge: but his bodyly presence is weake, and his speache rude." There is no evidence of euphuism here; but note the Authorized reading: "For his letters, say they, are

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weighty and powerful; but his *bodily* presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." This affords a typical example, the chief words in the first part being "letters," "weighty," and "powerful"; in the second "presence," "weak," and "contemptible."

Here is another example: 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may *present* you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' 2 Corinthians 11:2.

How similar to the following from *Euphues*: "As I have found thee willing to be a *fellow* in my travel, so would I have thee ready to be a *follower* of my counsel."

It is in the poetic books that the best examples of euphuism are found. Consider the first verse of Isaiah 35: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

A better example of what may be called the higher euphuism could hardly be found. The scheme is roughly as follows:

wilderness	solitary	glad	
desert	rejoice	blossom	rose.

The "l" in "wilderness" and "solitary" strikes the first note, the "l" in "glad" is a kind of projection of the sound, while that in "blossom" is the answering part in the second member. The "r" in the two first words is caught up and made the dominant note in the second member. Again, the initial "s" of "solitary" finds its

echo in the "s" in desert; there is also assonance between the "o" in "solitary" and the first "o" in "blossom."

Coverdale's translation of the verse reads: "But the deserte & wilderness shal rejoyse, and waist grounde shal be glad, and florish as the lilly." The Genevan: "The desert and the wilderness shall rejoice; and the waste ground shal be glad and flourish as the rose." It will be noticed that neither approaches the complete euphuistic pattern as closely as does the Authorized. We might go on through the whole chapter, and point out many other euphuisms. Other chapters afford equally good examples.

There is space for only one or two instances from the Psalms. Coverdale's translation of Psalms 47:5 is, "God is gone up with a merry noyse, the Lorde with the sownde of the tropet." The Genevan rendering is, "God is gone up with triumph, even the Lord with the sound of the trumpet." As usual it avoids the jaunty air which Coverdale at his worst sometimes unconsciously assumes, but does so by putting a very general term in its place. Note the power and beauty of the Authorized rendering: "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." This is now a full-fledged euphuism, with both members. "Shout" was needed, its "t" to correspond to the "t's" in trumpet, and its diphthong to answer to "sound." "God" finds its echo in "Lord," while the "n" in "gone" finds its in "sound."

Notice the evolution in the direction of euphuism

in Psalms 96:6, which Coverdale renders: "Thankesgeuing and worshiþe are before him, power and honoure are in his Sanctuary." The Genevan reads: "Strength and glory are before him: power and beauty are in his Sanctuary." The Authorized: "Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."

One of the finest bits of apparently unconscious euphuism may be found in the Authorized rendering of Mark 5:23: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed."

But one additional example will be given. Revelation 21:4 reads in the King James Bible: "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Tyndale's rendering of the last clause is, "For the olde thynges are gone." The Genevan, "For the first things are gone." Comment is unnecessary.

There is a certain intensity observable in the renderings of the Authorized version which is strongly suggestive of the Elizabethans. A few examples will illustrate. Paul calls himself "less than the least of all saints." (Ephesians 3:8.) In Matthew 14:20 the other renderings tell us that the multitude ate and were satisfied, or sufficed; but the Authorized reads: "did eat and were filled." In the last verse of the same chapter we read in Tyndale: "As many as touched it were made safe";

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in the Genevan, "whole"; in the Authorized only it reads, "perfectly whole." Again in Matthew 12:5 the rendering, "The priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless," is peculiar to the Authorized, the others giving "break the Sabbath," which is a little less strong. In the parable of the prodigal son only in the Authorized version do we read: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough *and to spare*." In Luke 12:32 it alone tells us: "It is your father's *good* pleasure to give you the kingdom." How suggestive are some of these renderings of Elizabethan expressions such as "an excellent good man" and "everything done excellently well."

The Authorized version surpasses all others in what may be called daring constructions. Two or three examples must suffice. The text 1 Corinthians 1:28 reads in the Authorized: "And base things of the world, and things which are despised"; earlier translations had been "things of no reputation," producing an anticlimax, and utterly spoiling the force of the original. "He went forth conquering and to conquer," in Revelation 6:2, is an instance. Tyndale had rendered it, "He went forth conquering and for to overcome"; the Rheims, "Conquering that he might conquer." The rendering in Job 39:19, "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with *thunder*?" is another good example.

The Authorized version also shows the Elizabethan influence in its occasional tendency to looseness of gram-

matical structure. Thus Tyndale translated Romans 8:3: "For what the lawe coulde not doo in as moche it was weake because of the fleshe: that performed God, and sent his sonne in the similitude of sinfull flesh, and by synne damned synne in the fleshe."

The Authorized version reads: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Tyndale's sentence is normal; the Authorized sentence presents an example of a lack of grammatical sequence technically known as anacoluthon.

Again, Coverdale's rendering of Psalms 50:8 reads: "I reprove the not because of thy sacrifice, thy burnt offerings are allwaye before me." The Authorized reads: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me."

To the differences already noted between the style of the early sixteenth-century versions and that of the Authorized must be added the fact that the latter shows traces of the Elizabethan influence in the fine poetic quality of many of its renderings, in a certain intensity of expression, and occasionally in a disregard for the niceties of grammar.

CHAPTER VI

Interesting Stages in the Development of Biblical Prose

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," is perhaps the supreme verse of the Bible. The essence of the Scripture is (here) crystallized in a sentence. . . . An absolute truth is clothed in a form of absolute beauty. The majesty of the rhythm fits the nobility of the thought. A modern version reads: "For God loved the world so dearly, that he gave up His only Son so that every one who believes in Him may have eternal life, instead of perishing." The thought is preserved, but the divine note has vanished. Such a proclamation should not end with a qualifying clause, but with a strong affirmation—"everlasting life."—CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE, *The English Bible as Literature*, pp. 105, 106.*

CHAPTER VI

Interesting Stages in the Development of Biblical Prose

TYNDALE'S PROSE, it has been seen, although having much in common with the prose of the Authorized version, is on the whole distinctly inferior to it. In the present chapter will be traced the process, in the case of single words and phrases and of longer passages, by which the final perfection of form was reached. This perfection itself suggests a gradual development, with the kindly co-operation of time and of many able minds; for even the greatest literary artists, as Walter Pater somewhere says, do not work quite cleanly; there must always be some debris, some worthless slag, if a man is left entirely to his own resources.

The evolution in the present case is the more inevitable because the early translations were necessarily crude in parts, owing to the poverty of the language in its early stages. Tyndale's successors were able to improve upon his work because they had resources denied to him.

On the other hand, it was to the advantage of the final version that the version which pioneered the way should be prepared before the language had attained

its full growth and development. As Mr. Gardiner has well pointed out, it is a disadvantage in preparing a work of that kind to be oppressed with too large a number of synonyms.

A body of prose, moreover, which is based on a rugged simplicity, and undergoes a process of purification and refinement only as the language and the heightened religious consciousness demand it, will possess graces of style and a final inevitableness of form which it could not have attained in any other way.

The evolution proceeded step by step with the development of the national spirit. As the church took on permanent form, the idea of a sacred dialect shaped itself in the minds of the people, and it was clearly seen in what direction the development had been tending during previous generations. The medieval principle of law and order and of religious unity asserted itself in the demand for one authorized version; and the style of this final version, in which the sacred dialect reached its highest stage of development, bears the medieval impress to an extent that is true of no other translation except the Rheims version. In fact, it presents a more unified and consistent medieval form than the latter, because its language is more constantly archaic.

In some cases it will appear that certain intermediate forms, in themselves poor, are nevertheless of great value in the plan of evolution. Inferior in themselves to previous readings, they embodied a new principle, and

in the next following stage achieved an unexpected perfection.

First will be considered a few examples of evolution of the single word; then of phrases, and finally of longer passages. Of course this division has not been followed too closely. In the longer passages there will be individual forms belonging under one of the other classes, but the general grouping will be convenient.

Tyndale's translation of Philippians 4:5 reads: "Let your *softenes* be knowen unto all men. The lord is even at honde." The Genevan changed "softenes" to "patient mind," the Rheims employed "modesty." The Authorized reads: "Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." It seems possible here that by association of sound "modesty" suggested the final rendering.

In Genesis 23:4, Abraham, according to Coverdale's version, calls himself "a stranger and an indweller"; the Genevan changed the latter word to "foreigner"; in the Authorized version it becomes "sojourner." "Indweller" was too remote, "foreigner" was too common, "sojourner" exactly meets the need, and has a well-defined place in the sacred vocabulary.

In the beautiful rendering of Psalms 42:1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," the word *panteth* has a curious history. Coverdale, contrary to usual custom, did not attempt a concrete rendering, but gave us: "Like as the

hart desyreth the water brokes, so longeth my soule after the, o God." The Genevan reads: "As the hart brayeth for the rivers of water, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "Brayeth" was vivid and picturesque, but a little too highly colored for the sacred dialect; the word *panteth* of our present Bible conveyed the correct meaning. It had concreteness of the restrained kind, and it was a rather unusual use of the word, thus doubly fitted for a place in the sacred vocabulary.

Sometimes an admirable rendering of Wycliffe's, after giving way to inferior renderings by Tyndale and his successors, came into its own at last by being adopted in the Authorized version. This is Wycliffe's translation of Matthew 19:22: "And whanne the yong mann hadde herde these wordis: he wente away sorwful, for he hadde many possessions." Tyndale's rendering is, "He went away mourning." It was not quite the right word, so Coverdale changed it to "Went away sorye." The Genevan returned to "mourning," the Rheims used "sad," but the Authorized adopted Wycliffe's original rendering of "sorrowful," and certainly made a good choice.

Coverdale's first rendering of Psalms 19:5 speaks of the sun "which cometh forth as a brydegrome out of his chambre, and rejoyseth as a giaunte to rune his course." The Genevan rendered it, "Rejoyceth like a mighty man to run his race." This was some improvement; but rather than size or might, it was strength that

the thought evidently required, and the Authorized gave us the acceptable rendering, "Rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."

Let us now consider some phrases which have resulted from the same kind of development.

Matthew 19:28 is rendered felicitously in the Authorized version: "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." Tyndale had rendered the phrase, "the seate of his maieste," the Genevan made it "throne of his majesty," thus preparing the way for the final form.

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is often alluded to in various ways. Tyndale rendered it simply "unquyetnes of the flesshe," not attempting a concrete translation; the Genevan, taking a hint from Wycliffe, rendered it "a prick in the flesh," which was a steppingstone to the final one.

Tyndale renders Romans 3:25: "Whom God hath made a seate of mercy thorow faith in his blood"; Coverdale changed it to "the obtainer of mercy"; the Genevan to "a pacification"; the Rheims rendered it: "Whom God hath proposed a propitiation"; finally the Authorized reads: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

The progression is often in the direction of modifying the expressions that were out of keeping with the sacred dialect. Such, for instance, was Coverdale's rendering: "Heare me, o ye that are of an hie stomach, but

far from righteousness." The Genevan rendering is: "Hear me ye stubborn-hearted, that are far from justice." The Authorized: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness." It is interesting to note how exactly the wording of the Authorized version conveyed the thought of Coverdale's spirited rendering without employing his too strongly colored language. The substitution of "hearken" for "heare" is also significant. "Hearken" is one of the important words in the sacred dialect.

The Authorized rendering of 1 John 3:16 is: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he *laid down* his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Tyndale's rendering was "gave his lyfe"; the Rheims, "yielded." It is little touches of this kind that go far to account for the singular felicity of many passages in the King James Bible.

Psalms 119:17, 18 reads in our common version: "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Coverdale translated: "Do well unto thy servant, . . . so shall I spie out wonderous thinges in thy lawe." The Genevan: "Be beneficial unto thy servant, . . . open mine eyes that I may see the wonders of thy law." "Spie out" was too vivid and concrete, but "behold" suited the emotion exactly. "Be beneficial" is inferior to "do well," but it was a valuable intermediate form leading to "deal bountifully."

Coverdale translated Psalms 116:1: "I am well pleased that the Lord hath heard the voice of my prayer." What an improvement in vividness and concreteness is the Genevan: "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my prayers." The Authorized gives the final touch by substituting for "prayers," "supplications."

Again, Coverdale's rendering of Deuteronomy 32:10 reads: "He founde him in the wyldernesse, euen in the drye deserte where he roared." The Genevan characteristically avoids the absurdity and renders it: "He found him in the land of the wilderness, in a waste and roaring desert." But the version we have learned to revere gives us the inimitable rendering: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness."

In taking up a few of the longer passages, we shall begin with the first chapter of Genesis. Here is Coverdale's version of the first few verses:

"In the begynnyng God created heauen & earth: and the earth was voyde and emptie, and darcknes was vpon the depe, & the sprete of God moued vpon the water. And God sayde: let there be light, & there was light. And God sawe the light that it was good. Then God deuyded the light from the darcknes, and called the light, Daye: and the darcknes, Night. Then of the euenyng and mornynge was made the first daye."

Here is the translation in the Bishops' Bible, corrected to agree with the Authorized:

"In the begynnyng God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without fourme and was voyde [A.V. omits "was"]: and darknesse [was] upon the face of the deepe, and the spirite of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be lyght: and there was lyght. And God sawe the lyght that it was good; and God divided the lyght from the darkness. And God called the lyght day, and the darknesse night [A.V. "darkness he called Night"]; and the evenyng and mornyng were the first day."

It will be noted that while Coverdale, following Tyndale, gave a straightforward and simple rendering of the Hebrew original, the translators who followed him went a step further in the direction of absolute simplicity and the removal of all surplusage. Note also the added concreteness of the expression "the face of the deep." The careful attention to rhythm, as in the addition of "he called" in the last sentence cited, is another element of beauty in the final rendering.

There is an interesting development observable in the translations of Psalms 126:5, 6. Coverdale rendered the passage: "They that sowe in teeres shall reape in joye. He that now goeth his waye wepinge and beareth forth good seed, shal come agayne with ioye, and brynge his sheaves with him."

Coverdale's rendering of the fifth verse all subsequent translators have followed, but the other one has gone through a number of changes. The Great Bible

rendered it in these words: "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed: shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." In the Genevan it becomes: "They went weeping and carried precious seed: but they shall return with joy and bring their sheaves." The Bishops' version reads: "He that goeth foorth on his way, and weeping beareth pretious seede: shal doubtlesse returnyng comme agayne with a joyful noyse, bringing his sheaves with him." The Authorized rendering is: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

It will be noticed that each of these different translations makes some contribution of value. The Genevan is somewhat bare and poor on the whole, but it adds that one word "precious," which in this particular connection is better than "good." the "joyful noyse" of the Bishops' version is a little too boisterous, but it prepares the way for "rejoicing." "Doubtless" is also an important addition; it is suggested in the original Hebrew by the repetition of "come."

The evolution of word and phrase is very noticeable in the book of Job. Following is Coverdale's translation of the first eleven verses of the thirty-eighth chapter, corrected according to the reading of the Great Bible of 1539 (Great Bible revisions are in italics):

answered
Then spake the Lord unto Job out of the storme,

and sayde: what is he, that hydeth his mynde with foolish
wordes? Gyrde vp thy loynes like a man, for I will
 with
question the, se thou geve me a durecte answere. Where
wast thou, when I layed the foundations of the earth?
Tell planely yff thou hast vnderstanding. Who hath
measured it, knowest thou? Or who hath spred the lyne
vpon it? Where vpon stonde the pilers of it? Or, who
 thereof
layed the corner stone? where wast thou when the
 prayed together
mornynge starres gave me prayse, when all the angels of
 triumphantly
God reioysed? Who shutt the see with dores, when it
 the
brake forth as a childe out off his mothers wombe?
When I made the cloudes to be a coueringe for it, and
swedled it with the darcke? When I gaue it my
comaundement, makynge dores and barres for it say-

enge: Hither shalt thou come, but no further, and
there
here shalt thou lay downe thy proude and hye wawes.

The Genevan version, with the Authorized substitutions in italics, follows:

the Lord answered Job
1. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the
whirlwind, and said,

darkeneth counsel
2. Who is this that darkeneth the counsel by words
without knowledge?

for
3. Gird up now thy loins like a man: I will demand
answer thou me.
of thee, and declare thou unto me.

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of
the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

5. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou
upon
knowest? or who hath stretched the line over it?

fastened?
6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof set: or

The Prose of Our King James Version

who laid the corner stone thereof:

7. When the stars of the morning praised me together, and all the children of God rejoiced:

8. Or who hath shut up the sea with dores, when brake forth, as if it had issued it issued and came forth as out of the wombe:

9. When I made the clouds as a covering thereof, thick and darkness as the swaddling bands thereof:

10. When I established my commandment upon it, and set bars and doors,

11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall it stay thy proud waves.

This short passage contains some of Coverdale's finest work; it also shows his characteristic weaknesses. The beauty of the final rendering owes much to his bold phrasing, but hardly less to the fine sense of dignity and

¹ Marginal reading of Authorized version: "Established my decree upon it."

restraint which is so characteristic of the Genevan Bible.

The changes made in the first and second verses are significant as bringing out the essential features of the sacred dialect. "Whirlwind" is preferred to "storm," in the first place as being a closer approach to the Hebrew; moreover, it is more effective in that it is a less common word, more remote from everyday life, more solemn and mysterious. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (the Authorized version gave the finishing touch by omitting "the" before "counsel") represents the sacred dialect at its best. It says much the same thing as Coverdale's rendering, but it says it in the grand style. It makes Jehovah speak in language suited to His character. The changes in the seventh verse are interesting. Here the rendering of the Great Bible, in some ways inferior to Coverdale's first version, takes advanced ground in others. "Rejoiced triumphantly" evidently represents an attempt to embody the thought expressed so admirably in "shouted for joy." The Genevan version, so felicitous in the first and second verses, greatly loses in vividness by some of its attempted improvements upon Coverdale. The fine discernment of the King James revisers is shown by their utilization of all the best previous renderings, and some excellent readings of their own. Their preference for concrete terms is illustrated by the substitution of "brake" for "came" in the eighth verse, of "garment" for "covering" in the ninth, and of "sang" for "praised" in the seventh.

The Prose of Our King James Version

In the New Testament, as well as in the Old, our present translation is an eclectic version containing the felicities of many others, but drawing chiefly from Tyndale, the Genevan, and the Rheims versions. This fact will become clear if we present a passage from Tyndale's translation of Romans, corrected to agree with the Authorized version, and on the following page give the complete Authorized text, indicating by different type the chief sources of the felicities it presents.

Following is Tyndale's translation of Romans 8: 16-23, done into Biblical prose as we know it (the italics indicate the Authorized changes):

. . . *Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit*

The same spret certifieth oure sprete that we are the
children *And if children, then heirs;*
sonnes of God. Yf we be sonnes, we are also heyres, the

. . . *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;*
heyres, I meane of God, and heyres anexed with Christ

. *with him* *also*
if so be that we suffer togedder, that we may be glorified
together.
tosedder.

. . . *reckon* *sufferings* . . . *present time* .

For I suppose that the affliccions of this lyfe, are not
. *to be compared with the glory which shall be*
worthy of the glory which shalbe showed vpon us. Also
revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature
the fervent desyre of the creatures abideth lokinge

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waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the
when the sonnes of God shall appere, because the
creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by
creatures are subdued to vanyte agaynst their will:
reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, be-
but for his will which subdueth them in hope.
cause the creature itself also
For the very creatures shal be delivered from the
.
bondage of corruption, into the glorious lybertie of the
children *the whole creation groaneth*
sonnes of God. For we knowe that every creature groneth
. *and travaileth in pain together* . . . *until*
with us also, and travayleth in payne together, even unto
now. . . .
this tyme.

And not only they, but ourselves
Not they only, but even we also which have the fyrst
. *even we ourselves groan within our-*
frutes of the sprite, morne in oure selves and wayte for
selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our
the (adopcion) and loke for the deliveraunce of oure
body.
bodyes.

The following is the Authorized version of the same
passage, Romans 8:17-23, with the contributions of the
Genevan and Rheims versions indicated by italics and

small capitals respectively. The Authorized originals are in boldface type.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer *with him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present **TIME** are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be REVEALED in us. For the earnest EXPECTATION of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was MADE *subject* to vanity, not willingly, *but by reason of him* who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature ITSELF ALSO shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the CHILDREN of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until NOW. AND not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, *even* we ourselves GROAN WITHIN ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the REDEMPTION of our body.

CHAPTER VII

**Biblical Prose the Unique Achievement of a
Goodly Fellowship**

*When at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Authorized Version was made at the bidding, or with the sanction, of King James, all circumstances conspired to produce the rich poetic prose of the Bible. It is no wonder that many pious Englishmen have believed that the Lord looked with special favor upon this work. The best scholars of the universities and of the English church collaborated in harmonious devotion to the task. Between them they knew all that was knowable about earlier versions of the Scriptures in all languages. They therefore had all the resources of ancient languages to draw upon and they were sensitive to the vocabulary and rhythms of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Thus they enlarged the English language without violating its native structure and character.—JOHN MACY, *The Story of the World's Literature*, p. 58.*

CHAPTER VII

Biblical Prose the Unique Achievement of a Goodly Fellowship

THE SIX PRECEDING chapters cover in a general way the history of the gradual development of Biblical prose as it is seen in the Authorized version. It is proposed in the present chapter to give some additional attention to the respective contributions made by Wycliffe and Tyndale, and then go on to consider briefly the process by which groups of men working separately and together for nearly a century at the task of creating an adequate translation of a great masterpiece, were able to achieve a literary style of high excellence and not lacking in the unity which is generally associated with one-person authorship.

As a man and an outstanding leader in the English Reformation, Tyndale must always take high rank. In the words of H. W. Hoare, "When we look at his life as a whole, when we trace through its checkered scenes his unwavering persistency of purpose, his unaffected humility and self-effacement, the indomitable spirit that neither exile, nor disappointment, nor persecution could quench, the strong courage that no plots, no intrigues, no prospect of martyrdom could deflect by one hair's-

breadth from the path of duty, his transparent honesty and integrity, the conscientiousness and truthfulness that distinguish him as a scholar and a translator, and his faithfulness even unto death to the task which he had set himself to do, the name of the 'Apostle of England' can never be displaced from the proud position which it has long occupied on the roll of our great national benefactors."¹

Tyndale is also to be honored as the first man to make an English translation of the New Testament, and of a considerable part of the Old Testament, directly from the Greek and Hebrew originals. He possessed the instincts and the training of a scholar, along with rare strength of character, and he had the literary insight to perceive that the Hebrew, and to a considerable extent the Greek, Scriptures could be translated almost literally without doing violence to English idioms and syntax. In this matter he set a pattern for the translators who followed him, which is to his credit, even if the men responsible for the Genevan version often went further than he did in applying the same principle. He was also fortunate in possessing a deep spiritual insight into the truths of the Bible, and a real affinity for the writings of the apostles and prophets, his heart, like theirs, being aflame with an earnest desire to benefit his fellow men.

From the point of view of literary style, it is chiefly important that Tyndale lived when he did. English

¹ Hoare, *op cit.*, p. 157.

prose about the close of the first quarter of the sixteenth century was probably at its best for a translation of the Bible which was to form the basis for future elaboration. The language was deficient in abstract terms; it was also deficient in some of those finer distinctions which made for lightness of touch and a delicate style. It had the ruggedness and strength needed for the pioneer version that came from Tyndale's pen.

"As an original author," writes W. P. Ker, professor of poetry at Oxford, "he [Tyndale] is distinguished for the humble yet not too ordinary virtues of clearness and directness. He had a complete command of the language for the purposes of theological argument and controversy. . . . Lofty and eloquent passages are rarely to be found in him, but his views are stated concisely and effectively. His phrases are generally short and free from encumbrance. There is little color or imagination in his discourse; but it is not labored or clumsy." ²

Bernhard ten Brink, professor of English at Strasbourg University, makes this general statement: "In judging of Tindale as an author he must not be compared with Luther. The concise brevity, the striking logic, the genial flashes of intellect, which characterize the writings of the German reformer, will be looked for in vain in the Englishman. . . . Tindale does not lay hold of his reader like Luther, time and inclination are

² *English Prose*, vol. 1, p. 181, quoted in Moulton's *Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*, p. 249.

needed to enjoy him. But, on the other hand, the reader is powerfully affected by the depth of his convictions, the fullness of his arguments, the force of his descriptions, and many good ideas—and, above all, affected by the sincerity of the man.”³

George Saintsbury thinks Tyndale “is more noteworthy for his hapless fate and for a vigorous controversial pen than for distinct literary merit.”⁴ The following paragraphs taken from “The Obedience of a Christian Man” will give the reader a fair idea of Tyndale’s prose:

“Matt. xxvi. Christ saith unto Peter, ‘Put up thy sword into his sheath; for all that lay hand upon the sword shall perish with the sword:’ that is, whosoever without the commandment of the temporal officer, to whom God hath given the sword, layeth hand on the sword to take vengeance, the same deserveth death in the deed-doing. God did not put Peter only under the temporal sword, but also Christ himself; as it appeareth in the fourth chapter to the Galatians. And Christ saith, Matt. iii. ‘Thus becometh it us to fulfil all righteousness,’ that is to say, all ordinances of God. If the head be then under the temporal sword, how can the members be excepted? If Peter sinned in defending Christ against the temporal sword (whose authority and ministers the bishops then abused against Christ, as ours do now),

³ *History of English Literature* (Fourteenth Century to Surrey), tr. by Schnutz, p. 179, quoted in Moulton’s *Library*, pp. 248, 249.

⁴ *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 212.

who can excuse our prelates of sin, which will obey no man, neither king nor emperor? Yea, who can excuse from sin either the kings that give, either the bishops that receive such exemptions, contrary to God's ordinances and Christ's doctrine?

"And, Matt. xviith, both Christ and also Peter pay tribute; where the meaning of Christ's question unto Peter is, if princes take tribute of strangers only and not of their children, then verily ought I to be free, which am the Son of God, whose servants and ministers they are, and of whom they have their authority. Yet because they neither knew that, neither Christ came to use that authority, but to be our servant, and to bear our burden, and to obey all ordinances, both in right and wrong, for our sakes, and to teach us; therefore said he to St Peter, 'Pay for thee and me, lest we offend them.' Moreover, though that Christ and Peter, because they were poor, might have escaped, yet would he not, for fear of offending other and hurting their consciences. For he might well have given occasion unto the tribute-gatherers to have judged amiss both of him and his doctrine; yea, and the Jews might happily have been offended thereby, and have thought that it had not been lawful for them to have paid tribute unto heathen princes and idolaters, seeing that he, so great a prophet, paid not. Yea, and what other thing causeth the lay so little to regard their princes, as that they see them both despised and disobeyed of the spirituality? But our prelates, which care

for none offending of consciences, and less for God's ordinances, will pay nought. But when princes must fight in our most holy father's quarrel, and against Christ, then are they the first. There also is none so poor, that they hath not somewhat to give." ⁵

Thomas Fuller, in his *Church History of Britain*, which was published about the middle of the seventeenth century, gives the following thoughtful estimate of the work of Tyndale:

"Yet none will deny but that many faults needing amendment are found in his [Tyndale's] translation; which is no wonder to those who consider, first, such an undertaking was not the task for a man, but men: secondly, no great design is invented and perfected at once: thirdly, Tyndal, being an exile, wanted many necessary accommodations: fourthly, His skill in Hebrew was not considerable; yea, generally, learning in languages was then but in the infancy therof: fifthly, our English tongue was not improved to that expressiveness whereat at this day it is arrived. However, what he undertook was to be admired as glorious; what he performed to be commended as profitable; wherein he failed, is to be excused as pardonable, and to be scored on the account of that age, than of the author himself." ⁶

Tyndale was a reformer in the full sense of the

⁵ William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 188, 189.

⁶ *Church History of Britain: From the Birth of Jesus Christ Until the Year 1648*, vol. 3, book 5, p. 1845.

word. He seems to have shared the conviction of a number of scholarly men of the Renaissance that the great need of the people was knowledge, and if Englishmen could once read the Bible in their own tongue, many, if not most of them, would be led to follow its teachings. He was thoroughly honest in this conviction, though it was fully shared by only a few of his contemporaries. Sir Thomas More was also a product of the Renaissance, and in his own way a forward-looking man. A firm believer in the doctrines of the Catholic Church, he was not indifferent to the abuses that Tyndale clearly pointed out; but he felt that the work of reform must be a gradual one, and must not overstep the limits of Catholic orthodoxy. He had a profound respect for the church as a great social institution, and he foresaw hopeless division and possible civil war as the outcome of the wide circulation of an English Bible coming from a man who, in his eyes, was a sharp controversialist rather than an open-minded lover of religion. He gave Tyndale credit for having at the university the reputation of "a man of right good living, studious and well learned in Scripture";⁷ but he denounced the writings of the Reformer as not only erroneous, but dangerous to church and state.

The original writings of Tyndale were largely of a controversial nature. They did much to enlighten the public concerning the errors of the Roman Catholic

⁷ Samuel McComb, *The Making of the English Bible*, p. 11.

Church and the many gross abuses which had crept in from time to time, but they also aroused the anger of the leaders in the church, even of some who held liberal views. Robert Demaus, who wrote the best biography of Tyndale, characterizes the notes accompanying his translation of the Pentateuch as "extremely pungent and controversial in their tone." He goes on to say that "not a single passage is overlooked from which any comment could be drawn against the doctrines and practices of the Pope and the clergy." He adds by way of apology: "Those who have followed him [Tyndale] during long years of exile and persecution can understand the bitterness of heart which thus found vent in sharp and angry words, and can sympathize with him, even if they believe that his version of the five books of Moses would have been improved by the omission of this admixture of human resentment."^a

Tyndale was not unaware of the fact that his enemies were numerous and powerful; but he courageously went on with his work, leaving the event with God. In the 1534 edition of his New Testament he had opened his heart to his readers in these touching words:

"My part be not in Christ if mine heart be not to follow and live according as I teach, and also if mine heart weep not night and day for mine own sin and other men's indifferently, beseeching God to convert us all and to take his wrath from us and to be merciful as

^a Demaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 279, 282.

well to all other men, as to mine own soul, caring for the wealth of the realm I was born in, for the king and all that are thereof, as a tender-hearted mother would do for her only son.

"As concerning all I have translated or otherwise written, I beseech all men to read it for that purpose I wrote it: even to bring them to the knowledge of the Scripture. And as far as the Scripture approveth it, so far to allow it, and if in any place the word of God disallow it, there to refuse it, as I do before our Saviour Christ and His congregation. And where they find faults let them shew it me, if they be nigh, or write to me if they be far off: or write openly against it and improve it, and I promise them, if I shall perceive that their reasons conclude I will confess mine ignorance openly."⁹

The sentence of death passed upon Tyndale in 1536, and carried out in the same year, was not unexpected. "If they burn me," he had said eight years before, "they shall do none other thing than I look for." "There is none other way into the kingdom of life than through persecution and suffering of pain, and of very death after the example of Christ."¹⁰ The great man had accomplished the task he had set for himself back in the year 1523. He had made it possible for the plowboy to know the Scriptures better than the priest. His had been

⁹ Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁰ Quoted in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, art. "Tyndale," vol. 19, p. 1355.

the largest part in the great enterprise of giving Englishmen the Bible in their mother tongue.

The extent of Tyndale's indebtedness to Wycliffe is a matter concerning which there is some difference of opinion, but when all the facts are taken into consideration, it ought not to be difficult to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Neither of these great men fixed the style of our English Bible; each of them made his own valuable contribution to the growth and development of Biblical prose as we know it in the Authorized version, and Tyndale's contribution was larger than that of any other one translator. Nevertheless his debt to Wycliffe must not be overlooked.

Take almost any passage from Tyndale's New Testament, and it will be found to contain upwards of fifty per cent of the words of Wycliffe. In fact, when the spelling is modernized, the language of this early translation by Wycliffe reads very much like our English Bible of today. Here are two brief selections with modern spelling:

"And in one day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the grave, when it was yet dark. And she saw the stone moved away from the grave. Therefore she ran, and came to Simon Peter, and to another disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith to them, They have taken the Lord from the grave, and we wis not, where they have laid him. Therefore Peter went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the grave. And they twain run

together, and that other disciple ran before Peter, and came first to the grave. And when he stooped, he saw the sheets lying, natheless he entered not. Therefore Simon Peter came pursuing him, and he entered into the grave, and he saw the sheets laid, and the napkin that was on his head, not laid with the sheets, but by itself wrapped in to a place. Therefore then that disciple that came first to the grave, entered, and saw, and believed. For they knew not yet the scripture, that it behoved him to rise again from death.”¹¹

“And I saw in the right hand of the sitter on the throne, a book written with in and with out, and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel, preaching with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to undo the seals of it? And none in heaven, neither in earth, neither under earth, might open the book, neither behold it. And I wept much, for none was found worthy to open the book, neither to see it. And one of the elder men said to me, Weep thou not: lo! a lion of the lineage of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome to open the book, and to undo the seven seals of it. And I saw, and lo! in the middle of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the middle of the elder men, a lamb standing as slain, that had seven horns, and seven eyne, which be seven spirits of God, sent in to all the earth. And he came, and took of the right hand of the sitter in

¹¹ *Library of the World's Best Literature*, art. “Wyclife,” p. 16239, John 20:1-9.

the throne the book. And when he had opened the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elder men fell down before the lamb; and had each of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which be the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, and said, Lord our God, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals of it; for thou wert slain, and again boughtest (redeemest) us to God in thy blood, of each lineage, and tongue, and people, and nation; and madest us a kingdom, and priests to our God; and we shall reign on earth.”¹²

That Tyndale was influenced in any way by Wycliffe is denied by some on the strength of the statement appearing in the former's New Testament of 1525, which reads: "I had no man to counterfet, neither was holpe with englysshe of eny that had interpreted the same, or soche lyke thinge in the scripture beforetyme." This evidently means that he could not take Wycliffe's version as a basis; first, because it was not translated out of the original languages; and second, because the English language had undergone radical changes since Wycliffe's day. Tyndale's statement becomes quite intelligible when taken in its connection. He is speaking of the crudeness of his language, which the reader must pardon as arising naturally from the fact that his was the first effort to render the Greek text in modern English. Obviously Wycliffe's version could not supply help of this kind because it was not translated from the

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 16241, Rev. 5:1-14.

original Greek, and its language, belonging to an earlier stage in the development of the mother tongue, was cruder by far than Tyndale's.

That Tyndale was more or less familiar with Wycliffe's Bible becomes self-evident when it is recalled that it was not only in the leading libraries but in the homes of many people, chiefly in Purvey's revision. That Tyndale made use of the Wycliffe version as a help seems patent on almost every page of his New Testament. Even if some of the numerous coincidences are conceded as being the result of the influence over both men of the Vulgate, there remain others which may not be satisfactorily explained in this way. Here are a few examples, given in both cases with modern spelling:¹³

<i>Wycliffe</i>	<i>Tyndale</i>
Rom. vi. 14: For ye are not under the Law: but under grace.	Ye are not under the law, but under grace.
Rom. vii. 12: The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just and good.	The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just and good.
Rom. viii. 23: The first fruits of the spirit.	The first fruits of the spirit.
Verse 26: The spirit helpeth our infirmity.	The spirit also helpeth our infirmities.
Rom. ix. 3: I am left alone, and they seek my life.	I am left only, and they seek my life.

¹³ McComb, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-139.

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Wycliffe

Rom. xii. 11: Fervent in spirit.

Rom. xiv. 17: Righteousness and peace, joy in the holy ghost.

James i. 8: Unstable in all his ways.

Verse 12: He shall receive the crown of life.

Verse 17: Each perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.

Verse 22: Doers of the word, and not hearers only.

James ii. 5: Rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

James iii. 5: The tongue is but a little member: and raiseth great things.

Verse 17: Wisdom that is from above.

Verse 18: The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace to men that make peace.

James v. 5: Ye have nourished your hearts, in the day of slaying.

Verse 15: The prayer of faith shall save the sick man.

1 Peter ii. 24: He himself bore our sins in his body on a tree.

Tyndale

Fervent in the spirit.

Righteousness, peace and joy in the holy ghost.

Unstable in all his ways.

He shall receive the crown of life.

Every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Light.

Doers of the word and not hearers only.

Rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.

The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.

Wisdom that is from above.

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that maintain peace.

Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

The prayer of faith shall save the sick.

Which his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree.

Tyndale's failure to give credit to Wycliffe is not strange. Coverdale gave no credit when he took over Tyndale's New Testament almost bodily for his own version of the Bible, and Tyndale not only used Luther's Bible as a help but incorporated large portions of the Reformer's writings into his prologues, also without giving credit. The fact that Wycliffe's version lay under suspicion of heresy is another reason for Tyndale's making no reference to it.

Tyndale's real indebtedness to Wycliffe is not exhausted when the statement is made that he used the earlier version as a help in preparing his own translation. In putting the whole body of Scripture into the vernacular, and providing for its wide circulation by means of the Lollard preachers, Wycliffe had put a certain mold upon the language which it was not to lose; he had added to its resources as a medium for conveying spiritual truth; he had laid the foundations of the sacred dialect. If the impossible supposition that Tyndale never saw the earlier version could be made, then the fact that his own version reproduces in many verses the exact language of Wycliffe, and in general perpetuates nearly all of his finest renderings, as well as more than fifty per cent of his words and phrases on any given page, is eloquent testimony to the abiding influence on the English language of Wycliffe's pioneer version.

The impression is sometimes given that had it not been for Tyndale we might have had an English Bible

written in the unintelligible Latin-English dialect of the Rheims Testament. Is this in any sense true? Was not Tyndale following closely in the steps of his predecessors? Were not the qualities of earnestness and simplicity, which Mr. Gardiner assigns as the predominant characteristics of the English Bible, manifestly present, not only in Wycliffe's Bible, but also in the very earliest attempts to render the Scriptures in the vernacular? Are they not prominent in the originals? And could we have a conscientious translation which would not embody them in some considerable measure? Gregory Martin, as was noted in chapter 3, deliberately followed the rule of retaining in the original Latin form all the words which appeared to have doctrinal importance. It was his evident intention that the people should go to the priest to have the difficult passages explained. That a body of ardent reformers, keenly desirous of giving the common people the Scriptures in a form intelligible to them, should be in danger of adopting the Latin jargon of the Rheims version is not even a remote contingency: it is a palpable absurdity.

It has also been said that but for Tyndale we might have had an English Bible modeled closely after the artificial language that was adopted by certain writers near the close of the sixteenth century, language conscious of itself, fond of ornament, and lacking in strength and vigor. There is no real basis for such a fear. The translation of Wycliffe was marked by the utmost sim-

plicity, and the translators that followed Tyndale, as well as the men who laid down the rules for them, were all devoted to the idea of making a version that would be easily understood by the common people. They were earnest, wholehearted reformers, fully alive to the spiritual needs of the hour, and single-minded in their devotion to the great enterprise of giving an inspired book to the English people in language at once simple and appropriate to the importance of the spiritual message to be conveyed.

Men who have endeavored to help the common people with their writings have always used simple language. John Bunyan, referring feelingly to his manner of writing, said: "I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do; but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me; the devil did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me: wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was."¹⁴

As men and reformers, Wycliffe and Tyndale had some things in common. In the controversial works of both there is much sound reasoning along with clear exposition of gospel truths, mingled now and then with some things not so well considered. But when these men

¹⁴ *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Preface, p. 6.

applied themselves to the great task of making an inspired book speak to English minds and hearts, then their language took on added grace and beauty. It is not too much to say that both men, loving the word of God and knowing its power in their own lives, were divinely aided in their efforts to share its unique treasures with their fellow men.

While all the translators were of one accord in wishing to produce a real people's Bible, they had different ideas in regard to other matters. Samuel McComb has called our English Bible the most catholic thing in the universe, using the word *catholic* in its proper sense. He goes on to say that "friend and foe alike have directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly, left their marks upon its pages. Reformer and Humanist, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Prelatist and Puritan, Calvinist and Arminian, Trinitarian and Unitarian, Orthodox and Liberal—all meet here if nowhere else and lose their mutual discords in a higher symphony."¹⁶

Charles A. Dinsmore bears this testimony to the many diverse sources from which the Authorized version has drawn its virtues:

"Our English Bible is more than the translation of a great literature into an alien speech. It is a good book made better by the patient labor of many minds, many races, and many translators. Greece is in it, and Rome, and England. The best in the Orient and the best in the

¹⁶ McComb, *op cit.*, pp. xii, xiv.

Occident, the best of the ancient and the best of the modern world, have met together to produce a book as unique in diction as it is incomparable in thought and passion. It is the English language at the acme of its literary power, heightened and intensified by emotions which our race never could have originated.”¹⁶

The fact that the Hebrew language bears some resemblance to English was pointed out by Tyndale. This fact would naturally suggest a certain degree of similarity between the peoples who spoke these languages and something common in their life experiences. John Livingston Lowes, in his intensely interesting essay “The Noblest Monument of English Prose,” has eloquently set forth this relationship:

“It is not too much to say, I think, that the language of the English Bible owes its distinctive qualities, and that perhaps in no unequal measure, on the one hand to the vast desert spaces and wide skies of the hither Orient, and on the other to the open seas and rock-bound coasts of England. Nor do I mean that in the least as a mere figure of speech. For at the beginning of the long chain of development which makes the very language of the English Bible what it is, are the men who, beside the rivers of Babylon and Egypt, or among the hills and pasture lands of Israel and Judah, or in the wide stillness of Arabia, brooded and wondered and dreamed, and left a language simple and sensuous and steeped in the

¹⁶ *The English Bible as Literature*, p. 99.

picturesque imagery of what they saw and felt. At the end of this same chain of causes are the theatres of Shakespeare's London and the ships of the Elizabethan voyagers—of men whose language was as virile and as vivid as their lives. And between are the seventy at Alexandria and Jerome in his desert—Greece and Rome between Mesopotamia and England.”¹⁷

Does this seem somewhat fanciful? To the thoughtful reader, endowed with the historic imagination, it is the sober truth. The people of England have at various times in their history shown a certain kinship with the fundamental truths of the Christian religion. Their love of liberty, their spirit of independence, and their deep sense of patriotism cannot easily be separated from their reverence for the Inspired Book. In their conflict with Spain and later with Napoleon they were sustained by a sturdy patriotism not unmingled with religion. The rise of the Puritans in the seventeenth century, the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century, the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society, together with various foreign missionary enterprises early in the nineteenth century, and the poetry of such men as Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning—all these various movements had a definite connection with British regard for the fundamental teachings of the Bible. And when the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated near the close of the nineteenth century, it was

¹⁷ *Essays in Appreciation*, p. 5.

Kipling's "Recessional," deeply religious in tone, that best expressed the solemn pride linked with humility which has for centuries characterized the people of Great Britain.

World Wars I and II were fought by the peoples belonging to the British Commonwealth of Nations in much the same spirit as the conflict with Napoleon in the nineteenth century. Britain's stand for political freedom goes back a long way, and she was among the first of the nations to grant a good measure of religious liberty. The national love for the religion of the Bible was the soil that nourished the successive translations of the Holy Scriptures which finally came to a head in the magnificent King James version. In no other country were there groups of scholarly men working singly and together over a period of two hundred years in order to give their country the best possible translation of the Holy Scriptures.

It is hardly necessary to dwell further on the unity of the style of the Authorized version; but it may be well to sum up in a few words the facts bearing on that question which have been set forth at some length in the foregoing chapters. Let it be said, then, that while the sources of the Authorized version are numerous and varied, certain large facts and principles presided over the development of Biblical prose, and kept it within well-defined bounds.

1. The noble Latin version, known as the Vulgate,

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had been in the hands of educated Englishmen for centuries, and, from Tyndale on, the Hebrew and Greek originals exerted a powerful unifying influence on the scholarly men who struggled to bring home to the hearts of English readers the sublime truths of the Holy Scriptures.

2. The successive translators who labored in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries sought in every case to retain the wording of one or another of the previous translations unless a change was necessary on the score of accurate rendering of the original, or because the English needed judicious modernizing in order to make it intelligible to the reader. Thus the best things in earlier versions were not interfered with, and not only were the new renderings better than those they replaced, but they were such words and phrases as would blend harmoniously with the general texture of the older version.

3. The unity of Biblical prose was aided by the fact that the English language and the successive translations of the Bible grew up side by side, and reached maturity at the same time, the group of scholarly divines doing their epochal work in the late Elizabethan period, when English prose had reached its zenith.

4. The Authorized version as we know it is actually the work of the committee of forty-seven members; for they went through the Old and New Testaments word for word, and made all the changes that seemed neces-

sary in the interests of an accurate rendering of the originals and perfect intelligibility to the English reader. The time was propitious. The people of England were alive to their finger tips. The national spirit had taken on new strength with the fine achievements of the English Navy. New countries were being discovered; Englishmen were thinking new thoughts, and getting larger views of the world and their place in it. It was "a time of intense living, of incomparable zest in life. England was literally, in Milton's words, 'a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. . . .' With the new quickening of every phase of life the language itself kept even pace. There was a fresh consciousness of its possibilities, a sovereign and masterful exploitation of its hitherto undreamed resources. For the Elizabethans dealt with their speech as they dealt with life—with an adventurous zest in exacting from it all it had to give."¹⁶

Under these favoring circumstances the finishing touches were given to a literary masterpiece which had been gradually taking shape during a period of more than two hundred years. The forty-seven members of the committee probably had different viewpoints in regard to some matters of doctrine; but they were of one mind and heart in the effort to produce the best possible version of a book which they all held in reverence. Being humble men, they felt their need of divine guidance.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The admirably worded preface accompanying their translation clearly sets forth the spirit with which the company of forty-seven entered upon their great task: "And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, to the effect that St. Augustine did: O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight; let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them. In this confidence, and with this devotion, did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them." ¹⁰

They had clear ideas as to the task that lay before them. "Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water; even as *Jacob* rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of *Laban* were watered. Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at *Jacob's* well (which was deep) without a bucket or something to draw with: or as that person mentioned by *Esay*, to whom when a sealed book

¹⁰ Newth, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

was delivered with this motion, *Read this, I pray thee*; he was fain to make this answer, *I cannot, for it is sealed.*"²⁰

Referring to the translators who had prepared previous versions of the Bible, they say: "Blessed be they, and most honoured be their name, that break the ice, and give the onset upon that which helpeth forward to the saving of souls. Now what can be more available thereto, than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they understand. . . . yet for all that, as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the latter thoughts are thought to be the wiser: so, if we building upon their foundation that went before us, and being holpen by their labours, do endeavour to make that better which they left so good; no man, we are sure, hath cause to mislike us; they, we persuade ourselves, if they were alive, would thank us."²¹

They did not do their work in a hurry. "Matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity: for in a business of moment a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness. . . . Neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at length, through the good

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.”²²

The members of the committee felt that it was the spirit rather than the letter that should govern in cases where a literal rendering would be out of keeping with the demands of good English. They were also agreed in not yielding slavish worship to the Greek aorist or any other peculiar property of the Greek original. Seeing clearly that the writers of the Old and New Testaments did not use technical language, and often told the same story in different words, they felt perfectly free to use the same or a similar liberty, and thus managed to give us an English rendering of the Greek and Hebrew originals which does not seem at all like a translation but an original piece of English literature. Indeed it has been said that the Elizabethan version of the Bible is just as definitely a product of the English people as the *Iliad* is of the ancient Greeks.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

CHAPTER VIII

The English of the Revised Version of 1885

One reason why the English Bible has held its sovereign place is because a succession of translators have given most painstaking care to interpret the ultimate truths and emotions of religion in a form so adequate that they should have their full power. The translators so fashioned their sentences that the generations have felt that here is something unimprovable, permanent; here is the very glory of truth; here is the majesty of its power.

Consider for a moment some of these ultimate sentences: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. 11:28, 29.

Walter Pater, thinking of the divine appeal this passage makes, exclaimed: "How can a man explain that? There is a mystery in it—a something supernatural." . . . It is indeed great style, for it is a great call from the depths of a heart of infinite love, and such a call carries its own music with it.—CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE, *The English Bible as Literature*, pp. 103, 104.

CHAPTER VIII

The English of the Revised Version of 1885

BIBLICAL PROSE is generally considered to have achieved supreme excellence in the King James version. One need go no further to understand and appreciate its full development. Nevertheless, the fact that the version which served the needs of the English-speaking world for a period of more than two hundred and fifty years underwent revision in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and that at the hands of a large committee of able and scholarly men, selected from both sides of the Atlantic, is in itself a matter of deep interest. Moreover, it raises the question at once of how far the style of the old version was affected by the changes made in the course of revision.

The subject of a new and improved version of the Bible had been broached from time to time in England and also in America, and individual scholars here and there had gone so far as to submit to the public portions of the Scripture in a revised form. Some complete translations had appeared for which a very high degree of accuracy in the rendering of the originals was claimed. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century an increased interest in the subject had manifested itself,

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partly as a result of the discovery of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, an uncial manuscript found by Tischendorf in the monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai. This important discovery, together with the accession of other valuable literary material, made it possible to prepare a basic Greek text that would be a nearer approach to the original manuscripts than any text hitherto put out, and would accordingly open the way for the preparation of an accurate English version.

The project of a revision of the Authorized version was brought before the Convocation of Canterbury by Bishop Wilberforce in February, 1870, and after due consideration, was placed in the hands of a committee that reported favorably in the following May. Convocation thereupon proceeded to the execution of the plan by appointing two committees, of twenty-seven members each, to work on the Old and New Testament respectively. The membership of these committees was made up of scholars drawn from the church of England and the various nonconformist bodies. Correspondence was shortly entered upon with representative scholars in America, and also in this country two committees were formed which entered promptly upon their work. The translation of the Old Testament occupied something over fourteen years; the company at work on the New Testament completed its task in ten and one-half years. The work as a whole accordingly came before the public in the year 1885.

Sixteen years later, in 1901, there came from the press the American Revised version, containing in the main text certain renderings of the American committees which the English committees did not see fit to adopt, and which had been published as an appendix to the English version. Inasmuch as the American Revised version embodies no new principle of interpreting the original text, but represents on the whole a somewhat less conservative treatment of the Authorized version than that followed by the English revised, it does not at this juncture call for separate consideration. Presumably the version embodying those departures from the text of the Authorized version that the scholars of both countries could agree upon, would come the nearest to being representative of the needs and ideals of the English-speaking world. This version, accordingly, is the basis for the present discussion.

A period of more than sixty years has elapsed since the Revised version was placed before the English-speaking people of both hemispheres. This is time enough to determine the general character of the reception which has been accorded to the new version. What, then, is the verdict of the reading public? The main facts may be summed up as follows:

1. The Revised version has not replaced the old in the affections of the common people, and it is not perceptibly gaining ground in that direction, although it is widely used as a work of reference.

2. It does not find favor with men of pronounced literary tastes and training, because it lacks in some measure the fine literary flavor and many of the verbal felicities of the Authorized.

3. As a work of exact scholarship, representing a conscientious attempt to reproduce the meaning of the great Hebrew and Greek originals, the Revised version must be given high standing. If allowance is made for individual differences, mostly in matters of small importance, it has on the whole received the support of scholars and theologians.

The Revised version is thus seen to have achieved a measure of success, but not the kind and degree of success that was aimed at. It has the endorsement of a large number of scholarly men who know the originals and do not need a translation. It fails in large measure to suit the taste and meet the needs of that very numerous class of people who must read the Bible in a translation if they read it at all. In other words, it fails in its attempt to be an improved Bible for the English-speaking people.

What are the chief reasons for this failure? Most of the answers given thus far have been more or less partial and one-sided. Any attempt at a fundamental answer must be based, first, on a thorough understanding of the Authorized version and the historical development of Bible translation in English, of which it is the climax; and, second, on a knowledge of the nature and

extent of the changes introduced into it by the revisers of 1870.

These changes are of two kinds. A certain proportion have their origin in the fact that the text from which the revisers translated was different from that used by the makers of the Authorized version. The New Testament text that the revisers adopted after some independent study of the available material was practically the same as that prepared jointly by Drs. Brooke Foss Westcott and John Anthony Hort, well-known scholars of the Church of England, and members of the Revision Committee that dealt with the New Testament.

The text thus adopted contains more than five thousand new readings, and its selection by the New Testament Committee would seem to be out of harmony with the instructions given by Convocation to make as few departures as possible from the text of the Authorized version. Naturally there would be some criticism of this action of the Revision Committee. Dr. Frederick H. Scrivener and some other scholars believed that the revisers erred in judgment in adopting the Westcott and Hort text before it had been put into circulation and subjected to criticism. They also believed that the authors of this text had too high a regard for the readings of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, which while it is undoubtedly an old manuscript, does not seem to be as carefully prepared as some other manuscripts, and is therefore in their opinion of doubtful authority.

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One noticeable feature of the Westcott and Hort text is that it leans toward the Vulgate more than any previous non-Catholic version in English, if we except the Wycliffe Bible, which was translated directly from that ancient version. This in itself is not a blemish, for it is reasonable to believe that Jerome, when he was working out that standard Latin version, had access to older manuscripts than any that were available to the translators of the Authorized version. If the old manuscripts that have become available since 1611 happen to be more in accord with the Vulgate than the ones from which the Authorized version was translated, it was obviously the duty of Westcott and Hort, and the other revisers, to make use of them in the interests of truth and accuracy.

By far the greater number of new readings in the Revised version probably represent an honest attempt to render more accurately and with a larger degree of uniformity the texts of the Hebrew and Greek originals. Accuracy in a translation is of outstanding importance, especially when the original is believed to be an inspired utterance. Nevertheless, it may be said to have its serious limitations; for language is not susceptible to the same kind of scientific accuracy that prevails in the physical or chemical laboratory; and attempts to achieve verbal accuracy at the expense of freedom and general intelligibility may be disastrous, especially in the case of a book intended for the general public.

Among the men who have been most outspoken in their condemnation of the English of the Revised version are the professors of literature in colleges and universities. Thus George Saintsbury speaks of "the elaborately foolish attempt to revise" ¹ the Authorized version.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, late professor of English literature in the University of Cambridge, was inclined to look with favor on the revised edition of the Old Testament, in which the changes are comparatively few, partly because the available manuscripts present only slight variations. He was outspoken in condemnation of the revised New Testament: In his opinion the translators were seriously at fault in adopting the decision to translate a given Greek word always by the same English word. He also disliked their treatment of the Greek aorist.

Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed, professor of Biblical and patristic Greek in the University of Chicago, is likewise critical of the language used in the Revised version. "Even where the English feeling of the King James version was glaringly at fault," he writes, "the revisers did not venture to correct it, and sometimes where its instinct for sound English had been alert, they turned away from it. Strangely enough, it was the most important voice of all, the voice of a sound sense for English, that was least heard in the revisers' councils." ²

¹ *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 381.

² *The Making of the English New Testament*, p. 88.

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Matthew Arnold, the English poet and critic, was keenly alive to the deficiencies of the Revised version, but he also realized more than some men the fact that the revisers had undertaken a tremendous task, and his criticism is kindly and sympathetic while at the same time not lacking in finality.

In an article appearing in *The Nineteenth Century* shortly after the publication of the Revised version of the New Testament, and some years before the appearance of the Old Testament in revised form, he quotes Goethe's definition of beauty—"The beautiful is a manifestation of the secret laws of nature, which, but for its apparition, would have forever remained hidden from us"—and then goes on to say:

"Our established version comes to us from an age of singular power, and has great beauty. This beauty is a source of great power. Use and wont have further added to the power of this beauty by attaching to the old version a thousand sentiments and associations. Altogether, a force of the utmost magnitude has come into being. The revisers seem to me to have been insufficiently aware either of the nature of this force, or of its importance and value. They too much proceed either as if they had the recipe, if they broke up the force of beauty and sentiment attaching to the old version, for producing this force afresh themselves, or else as if the force was a matter of no great importance. In either case they are mistaken. The beauty of the old version is 'a

manifestation of the secret laws of nature,' and neither the revisers nor any of us can be sure of finding the recipe, if we destroy this manifestation, for compounding another as good. And if we think that its beauty does not much matter, then we have nature against us; for a manifestation of beauty is a manifestation of the laws of nature."³

This seems to be a fair statement of the general impression that the revised New Testament makes upon the large majority of men and women who have a feeling for the beautiful in language, and cannot but miss in the new version a certain distinction of literary style and many verbal felicities that are a marked feature of the old.

But Matthew Arnold does not stop with this general statement. He goes on to deal more specifically with the chief weakness of the new version:

"The revisers have been led away by a very natural desire to correct all the mistakes of the old version, and to make a version which should be perfectly accurate. When once one is engaged, indeed, in a task like that of the revisers, the desire to alter is sure to grow upon one as one proceeds, the 'offendiculum of scrupulousness,' as Butler calls it, is sure to increase; until at last one is capable of forgetting that even the aorist was made for man and not man for the aorist, and of waging against

³ "Isaiah of Jerusalem," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 13, pp. 587, 588.

the past tenses of the old version an often pedantic war. To have fallen into this course of proceeding is so natural, that I will by no means make it a matter of reproach against the revisers; probably, had I been one of them, I should have fallen into it myself. But it would have remained none the less true that this is just one of those cases where 'the half,' as the Greek proverb says, 'is more than the whole;' and that, by resisting the impulse to alter, by never forgetting that the object in view was not to make a perfectly accurate translation, but to preserve unimpaired the force of beauty and sentiment residing in the old version at the same time that one made such corrections as were indeed necessary—only by submitting to these conditions was real success possible to the revisers. As it is, they have produced a work excellently fitted to help and instruct, in reading the New Testament, all who do not know Greek;—a work which in this way will be of invaluable usefulness, and from which every reader will probably import for his own use into his New Testament such corrections as seem to him urgently needed, but they have not done that which they were meant to do: they have not given us a version which is just the old version improved, and . . . can take the place of it. In fact, a second company of revisers is now needed to go through the recent revision, and to decide what of it ought to be imported into the established version, and with what modifications.” ‘

‘*Ibid.*, pp. 588, 589.

Arnold discusses the translation of the Old Testament, which was then still in course of preparation, and gives counsel to the committee to whom the task has been committed. He does not minimize the difficulty of the task, but he makes one outstanding request: "Let us say to ourselves and say to the revisers that the principal books of the Old Testament are things to be deeply enjoyed, and which have been deeply enjoyed hitherto. It is not enough to translate them accurately; they must be translated so as also to be deeply enjoyed, and to exercise the power of beauty and of sentiment which they have exercised upon us hitherto. Correct information by itself, as Butler profoundly says, is 'really the least part' of education; just as religion, he adds, 'does not consist in the knowledge and belief even of fundamental truths.' No; education and religion, says Butler, consist mainly in our being brought by them 'to a certain temper and behaviour.' Now, if we are to be brought to a temper and behaviour, our affections must be engaged; and a force of beauty or of sentiment is requisite for engaging them." *

Religion is undoubtedly largely a matter of emotions, though it is not incompatible with the full use and development of the reasoning powers. The imagination plays a large part in religion, and it is the all in all of anything that can be called literature. Without imagination there can be no writing that has the appeal of true

* *Ibid.*, p. 589.

literature, and neither can there be sufficient development of the emotional faculties to produce religion.

The statement that the English style of the Revised version is defective, should not be understood as meaning merely that the artistic instincts of men and women of literary culture are offended by it. That in itself would be unfortunate, but not necessarily productive of far-reaching consequences for evil. The important fact is that the revisers in neglecting to observe the idioms and natural rhythms and cadences of the English language turned their backs on the needs of the common people, and that merely to meet the sometimes fanciful requirements of a few grammarians. In striving to reproduce with painful accuracy certain fine distinctions in the original Greek, they lost sight of the claims of the English language, and the English people, and have given us in some instances renderings that are scarcely intelligible to the average reader. Luther, who understood the needs of the common people, was deeply impressed with the importance of giving them the Word of God in language easy of comprehension. He repeatedly said that it was his hardest task to get the Hebrew prophets to talk German. To this end he toiled night and day in order that his translation of the Bible might be made up of words and phrases instinct with reality, familiar expressions that belong to the home and the fireside. Only thus could he make the Bible a part of the life of the German people.

The style of a version, rightly considered, is not merely a matter of aesthetics, but it is a question of all-round intelligibility, and the successful communication of thought and feeling to the heart of the reader. In a very real sense the style is part of the message. Before we can have literature, beautiful thoughts and noble feelings must take the form of those inevitable words and sentences which cannot safely be changed. Raw, undigested grammar, phrases that are neither Greek nor English, but something between the two, have no place in literature, and they cannot be tolerated in a Bible which is to reach the hearts of the common people. That which is beautiful in the original should be beautiful also in the English translation; and that which is free, and natural, and spontaneous as spoken by the prophet, the scribe, or the apostle, should not be crabbed and strained in our people's version. Yet that is a fair way to characterize some of the renderings of the Revised version, and the point of outstanding importance is that such renderings not only are offensive to good taste but really weaken the force of the original message, and interfere to a greater or less degree with that work of grace which the Bible properly translated is able to accomplish in the hearts of its readers. They make it in some degree a work of criticism rather than a message addressed to the human soul.

It is important that the translator have a clear apprehension of the meaning of the original. It is equally im-

portant that he should be able to put it into English that will be intelligible to the reader of today, and will produce in his heart the same emotions that were produced in the hearts of those who read it in the original. We live in a scientific and practical age, and we are likely to overlook the place that beauty naturally fills in the education and uplift of the so-called masses. The revisers, as Matthew Arnold has pointed out, yielded to a natural temptation to make more changes in the text of the Authorized version than were strictly necessary. They also erred, it seems, in ignoring the claims of good English style.

But it must not be forgotten in evaluating the translation they have given us that they were under great temptation. When the minds of scholarly men are occupied over a considerable period of time with the careful weighing of the exact meaning of words in a foreign language, it is possible for them to lose sight temporarily of the claims of their mother tongue. This is especially likely to be the case in translating from Greek to English, because the two languages are different. Greek, even in its Hellenic form, excels in the ability to make fine distinctions. English, on the other hand, while it has not the intellectual subtlety of the Greek, is able to convey a simple, heartfelt message charged with emotion. In this respect it is akin to the Hebrew, which is likewise inferior to the Greek in its range of intellectual concepts, but superior to it as a means of communicating those

simple elemental feelings that impart a sense of the sublime.

In reading some of the renderings of the revisers, one cannot well avoid the feeling that their minds were so strongly exercised over the errors of the Authorized version that they were scarcely able to perceive its excellences. Minute imperfections in conveying the exact force of a Greek word or phrase were permitted to occupy their critical faculty to the practical exclusion of larger and more important considerations. The translator who has a true perspective must often ask himself the question whether a given word is or is not important in a particular passage. If the latter is the case, then a failure to render its exact meaning might be justifiable if thereby the central idea of the passage could be more adequately brought out.

This principle holds good in all works of art. Minute attention to details in a part of the picture which naturally belongs in the background, is destructive to the main effect of the picture, and is an element of untruthfulness, even when it most closely approaches an accurate reproduction of the object. The skillful photographer tones down certain details of a plate, not to give an untruthful effect, but to present his subject as nearly as possible as he appears in actual life. We must call on the camera to do its utmost when our object is to search out and number the otherwise invisible stars and planets; but we find it necessary to eliminate a part of the pho-

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tographic record in dealing with the human form, and also in recording the landscape. This is always done, however, in order to bring out more strongly the essential features both of the human form and of the landscape.

The authors of the King James version kept this informing principle fully in mind as they labored to make the message of the Bible clear and intelligible to the minds of Englishmen. Their conception of truth to the great originals did not center in the precise dictionary denotation of the individual words. They considered words not as standing by themselves alone, but as forming parts of the sentence and the paragraph, and they studied to find English words and phrases which would reproduce in Englishmen the thoughts and feelings which the Greek and Hebrew words had produced on those who read the originals.

The translators of the Authorized version struggled with the difficulties of expression in a vital way. They weighed words in even balances, keeping in view their connotations as well as the definitions of them given in dictionaries. They considered the larger harmonies of style, and they carefully estimated the effects of verbal changes upon the rhythm and cadence of the individual sentence or phrase.

They were not satisfied with a mechanical rendering of the original Greek or Hebrew, even if from the dictionary point of view it could be proved to be cor-

rect. They sought more than correctness—they sought beauty, expressiveness, force. They showed a preference for idiomatic expressions, knowing that these have power to reach the hearts alike of the common people and of the cultured classes. They purposely avoided the baldly literal translation because such a rendering of the Sacred Book would place it out of reach of the plow-boy and lady's maid as well as the carpenter, the bricklayer, and all the other members of the so-called laboring class. They knew, too, that while the members of the cultured classes would understand the meaning of such a rendering, it would not come home to their hearts with the force and vitality of a translation touched with natural beauty. In other words, the translators of the Authorized version sought beauty in word and phrase, not for its own sake, but for its power over the human heart.

In the chapter immediately following, which deals chiefly with the Revised Standard version of the New Testament, some facts are set forth that have a bearing also on the subject matter of this chapter.

CHAPTER IX

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

The multitudes go to the Bible, not for knowledge, but for power; they go to renew their sense of spiritual realities, and to catch again the vision splendid. This book passes beyond a classic and becomes to men a Word of God, because it voices those ultimate truths which give to life its meaning. These are the truths upon which our faith rests, which bring comfort to our hearts, and keep burning the fires of hope. They are as final to religion as the primary colors are to painting, or the line and the circle to geometry. The men who first expressed them endeavored to state them in the fullness of power; they were passionately concerned to have these truths produce their full effect in reaching men's minds and hearts.

*Now I maintain that the translator of the Bible has not accomplished his task if he simply conveys to his readers the thought of the original author, or even if to this be added a good imitation of the foreign form and savor of language. He must so use our idiom that the truth shall come to us with no less force than it came to the original readers. The light must pass through the prism of his sentences without losing any of its healing rays.—CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE, *The English Bible as Literature*, pp. 102, 103.*

CHAPTER IX

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

ADVERTISED WIDELY as the most important publication of the year, the Revised Standard version of the New Testament came off the press in February, 1946. The authors state in the preface that "all of the reasons which led to the demand for revision of the King James version one hundred years ago are still valid, and are even more cogent now than then." They give two good reasons for not being satisfied with the Revised version of 1881 and the American Revised version of 1901:

"One is that these are mechanically exact, literal, word-for-word translations, which follow the order of the Greek words, so far as this is possible, rather than the order which is natural to English; they are more accurate than the King James Version, but have lost some of its beauty and power as English literature.

"The second reason is that the discovery of a few more ancient manuscripts of the New Testament and of a great body of Greek papyri dealing with everyday affairs of life in the early centuries of the Christian era, has furnished scholars with new resources, both for

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seeking to recover the original text of the Greek New Testament and for understanding its language.”

The following statements summarize the general character of the new version:

1. The Revised Standard version contains no changes in doctrinal or fundamental concepts.

2. Inaccuracies and errors of older versions have been corrected in the light of ancient manuscripts.

3. Archaic forms of expression have been replaced by the language of today.

4. The new translation embodies the accuracy of the American Standard version along with the enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty of the King James version, and presents an illuminating text for Christian readers who insist on God's truth as He revealed it.

“The version,” we are further told, “is the work of the American Standard Bible Committee, appointed in 1929 by the International Council of Religious Education on behalf of the forty Protestant denominations associated in that body. Thirty-one of the foremost Biblical scholars and teachers of our time have been members of this committee.” The names of the nine members of the committee who worked on this Revised version are given, the list including such well-known specialists in the field of New Testament study as Edgar J. Goodspeed, of the University of Chicago, and the late James Moffatt, of Union Theological Seminary.

A new translation of a book that commands the reverent admiration and loyal obedience of millions of people all over the world is indeed an enterprise of the greatest interest and importance. The men to whom this work was entrusted are thoroughly competent in the field of New Testament scholarship. The translation they have given us is undoubtedly superior to previous translations in several important particulars. The authors have achieved a high degree of accuracy in rendering the thought of the original without attempting to follow the Greek so strictly as to interfere with English idioms. The language of the translation is not cramped or unnatural; it reads smoothly, and is always perfectly intelligible. The errors in grammar that occur in the King James version and in the English revised have been avoided, and a reasonable system of punctuation has been followed. Here and there verbal changes have been made which are real improvements over previous renderings. As a work of conscientious scholarship free from serious errors of translation, and superior to the modern versions in that it retains in large part the many felicities of the older versions, this new translation offers something very much like a challenge to the one that has commanded almost universal admiration for three centuries.

The question that many will raise is, Why did not the translators more generally retain the wording of the King James New Testament? In other words, why did

they make so many changes? The answer would probably be that, in the eyes of the translators, the rejected readings either came short of being accurate renderings of the original, or were too archaic in character to be easily understood by many readers of today.¹ Accuracy is of course an important thing in dealing with a book which is regarded as an authoritative guide in all matters pertaining to Christian doctrine. And yet it is possible that we can pay too high a price for mere verbal accuracy.

Let us return now to some of the claims mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is well that the new translation follows the example of previous versions in not introducing readings that would involve "changes in doctrinal or fundamental concepts." Presumably there was no real temptation to make such changes. The essential doctrines of the New Testament are contained in the teaching of our Saviour as recorded in the four Gospels, to which may be added the epistles of the apostle Paul. The Saviour taught by precept and parable and by His own personal example. His teaching, moreover, was so simple, and is so clearly set forth in each of the four Gospels that if any three of them should be lost, the remaining one would be sufficient to cover all the essential things. Paul's epistles are less simple in their presentation of some phases of Christian truth; but his

¹ See Appendix, page 235, for a reasonably full statement of changes in wording which add materially to the reader's understanding of certain passages of the New Testament.

religion consisted chiefly in following devoutly in the footsteps of the Saviour, and he taught his converts to do likewise, saying to them: "In him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him."

In this connection it may be well to refer briefly to the statement of the publishers which informs us that the new version "presents an illuminating text for Christian readers who insist on God's truth as He revealed it." Such a statement is a little strange in view of the well-known fact that there are thousands of variations in the manuscripts that have come down to us, and the original manuscripts of the four Gospels (which probably first assumed written form in the second half of the first century), differ more or less from one another both in the narratives relating the acts of the Saviour and in the reports of His teaching. Such being the case, it is hardly correct to claim for a translation that in any literal sense it contains "God's truth as He revealed it." In a general sense the claim can be made for all the translations of the Holy Scriptures, including the well-known modern versions of recent years.

It is well to remember that God's truth may be expressed in many different ways, some of them being especially adapted to persons with but little book knowledge, others making a special appeal to the so-called educated classes. If exact wording were the all-important

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thing, the Saviour would surely have left His message in written form. Being the matchless teacher that we know Him to have been, He made His great world message clear to a group of humble disciples, and trusted them to give it correctly to the world with the aid of the Holy Spirit, who would bring to their remembrance the things He had taught them, and also teach them some advanced truths which they were not in a condition to receive while the Saviour was with them in person.

In view of the great Teacher's adoption of this method, which has been entirely successful, Christians of today do well to realize that the essential truths of the gospel do not depend on absolute verbal accuracy in the rendering of a Hebrew or Greek original, which is itself more or less imperfect. Care in assembling and collating the various manuscripts and reasonable accuracy in rendering them into English are right and proper; but we should never lose sight of the fact that the same Spirit that helped "holy men of old" to write the books of the Old and the New Testament, is able and willing today to give all needed guidance to every person who reads the Bible reverently and with an open mind in order to obey its teachings.

We come now to a consideration of the claim that the new translation "embodies the accuracy of the American Standard Version along with the enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty of the King James Version." The statement is in large part true.

Many fine passages of the older version have come through the fire unharmed; but others equally fine have been made over into modern English, which is perfectly intelligible, but sometimes sadly lacking in the exquisite simplicity and rhythmic beauty of the Elizabethan masterpiece. The translators seem to have overlooked the fact that the King James version is avowedly archaic in diction and phraseology. Its beauty derives in part from the fact that it is closely related to the language of Shakespeare.

Biblical prose does not belong to any one period of English literature, but is an exquisitely wrought instrument made up of various elements brought together with such delicate workmanship as to form an artistic whole. The Biblical prose thus brought into existence cannot undergo serious changes without grievous loss of rhythmic beauty and expressiveness. The King James version, in short, is written in a sacred dialect, which has become so familiar to the great majority of Bible readers that it is actually more intelligible to them than ordinary prose carrying the same message, because it harmonizes with the spirit of devotion which one naturally brings to the reading of a sacred book. In rejecting the words "thou," "thee," "they," "thine," and the verb endings "eth," "th," "est," "idst," the translators are taking a step that does not seem to be justified on the score of greater intelligibility. Is it then necessary to turn away from the solemn style in order to make the message of the

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Bible appeal to the average reader? May it not rather be a real advantage in giving expression to religious truths to use a style of language that has come down to us from an earlier age, and is freighted with memories that are peculiarly precious? After all, religion is a matter of the heart as well as of the mind. By seeking out too carefully a style of language that is in familiar use on the street and in the market place, we may miss some words that speak to the conscience and the heart.

It is a well-known fact that secular authors have found it desirable to use the solemn style when trying to give adequate expression to deeply felt convictions. Thomas Carlyle does not seem out of place in bringing one of the chapters of *Sartor Resartus* to a close with the following paragraph: "I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even a Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."²

The Revised Standard version being avowedly intended for use in religious services as well as for private reading, this rejection of the solemn style seems unfortunate in that it deprives the new version of one element of power. An achieved distinction in language should

² Page 214.

not lightly be cast away. This is not to condemn those versions of the Bible that are intended to be modern throughout and do not claim to preserve the verbal felicities and rhythms of the Authorized version. In them the Biblical message is avowedly given in the language of today. There is something just a little incongruous in professing to retain the verbal felicities of the Authorized version, and rejecting one marked feature of its literary style.

Since the earlier chapters of this book have dealt rather fully with the various steps leading to the creation of Biblical prose, it is not necessary to enlarge upon the subject in this connection. It may be well, however, to introduce a few representative quotations from the new version in order that the reader may judge for himself how far its authors have succeeded in retaining the "enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty" of the King James version.

Following are typical passages taken from the two versions:

King James Version

2 Corinthians 4:17, 18: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:

Revised Standard Version

For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but

The Prose of Our King James Version

King James Version

for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Reading these passages in the Authorized version, one feels that they are intelligible, pleasing to the ear, and emotionally satisfying. The Revised rendering is equally intelligible, but otherwise somewhat inferior.

King James Version

John 11:43, 44: And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his

Revised Standard Version

the things that are unseen are eternal.

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Revised Standard Version

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth.

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose Him, and let him go.

Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Here again the two renderings are equally intelligible; one is consistently archaic—has about it the aroma of an older time. The other is partly in the everyday speech (*vide*, "come out"; and "dead man") and partly archaic, for "cried with a loud voice" is not modern English.

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

Colossians 2:9, 10: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

For in him dwells the whole fullness of deity bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

When this passage is read as given in the older version, the voice naturally dwells lovingly on the phrase "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "The whole fullness of deity" may be literally correct, but it lacks distinction.

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

Colossians 3:1-3: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affec-

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things

The Prose of Our King James Version

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

tion on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The Authorized rendering of this passage is a fine example of English prose at its best, and it is perfectly intelligible. The other translation seems wooden and labored in comparison.

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

Matthew 26:7: There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

A woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table.

"Expensive" is unfortunate in this connection because it suggests a financial transaction. "Precious," the word used in this text also by Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Rheims New Testament, means something intrinsically valuable, and is suggestive here of the love and devotion of the giver. It is a word that would not be out of place in a noble poem. "Expensive" does not lend itself kindly to poetry.

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

Revelation 2:10,11: Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. . . . Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death."

Both renderings are perfectly intelligible, and the solemn style seems especially appropriate in view of the nature of the content. "He that overcometh" is definitely superior to "He who conquers."

King James Version

Revised Standard Version

Philippians 2:4-8: Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Verse 13: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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King James Version

Verses 29, 30: Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Revised Standard Version

So receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.

In the first of these passages the Revised rendering of the sixth verse is undoubtedly an improvement over that of the older version; but in the other verses the advantage lies with the Authorized.

King James Version

Philippians 3:7-11: But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrec-

Revised Standard Version

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his suffer-

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

King James Version

tion, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Verses 13-18: Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: . . .)

Revised Standard Version

ings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who live as you have an example in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

For readers of today "refuse" is an improvement

The Prose of Our King James Version

over “dung,” but aside from this correction, both the foregoing passages could have been left unchanged with advantage to the reader. They are good examples of the “enduring diction, simplicity, and rhythmic beauty of the King James Version.”

King James Version

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13:
Though I speak with the
tongues of men and of angels,
and have not charity, I am be-
come as sounding brass, or a
tinkling cymbal. And though
I have the gift of prophecy,
and understand all mysteries,
and all knowledge; and though
I have all faith, so that I could
remove mountains, and have
not charity, I am nothing. And
though I bestow all my goods
to feed the poor, and though
I give my body to be burned,
and have not charity, it profit-
eth me nothing. Charity suffer-
eth long, and is kind; charity
envieth not; charity vaunteth
not itself, is not puffed up,
doth not behave itself un-
seemly, seeketh not her own,
is not easily provoked, think-
eth no evil; rejoiceth not in
iniquity, but rejoiceth in the
truth; beareth all things, be-
lieveth all things, hopeth all

Revised Standard Version

If I speak in the tongues of
men and of angels, but have
not love, I am a noisy gong
or a clanging cymbal. And if I
have prophetic powers, and
understand all mysteries and
all knowledge, and if I have
all faith, so as to remove moun-
tains, but have not love, I am
nothing. If I give away all I
have, and if I deliver my body
to be burned, but have not
love, I gain nothing. Love is
patient and kind; love is
not jealous or boastful; it is
not arrogant or rude. Love does
not insist on its own way; it
is not irritable or resentful; it
does not rejoice at wrong, but
rejoices in the right. Love
bears all things, believes all
things, hopes all things, en-
dures all things. Love never
ends; as for prophecy, it will
pass away; as for tongues, they
will cease; as for knowledge,
it will pass away. For our

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things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophesies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Revised Standard Version

knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In the first verse "clanging" is a better word than "tinkling," and modern English grammar would call for the substitution of "its" for "her" in the fifth verse, and possibly "if" for "whether" in verse 8. Otherwise this fine specimen of Elizabethan English at its best might well remain untouched.

The Prose of Our King James Version

"Though" is superior to "if" as conveying a slightly different mood, and "the gift of prophecy" is more specific and concrete than "prophetic powers." In the third verse "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor" conveys the essential thought more forcibly than "if I give away all I have," and "it profiteth me nothing" seems more meaningful than "I gain nothing." The substitution of adjectives for verbs in verses 4 and 5 detracts greatly from the force and vividness of the description. The solemn form of the verb is here as elsewhere in the Authorized version an element of beauty not to be despised. "We know in part" is a concrete expression superior to the abstract and comparatively colorless "our knowledge is imperfect," and "as" is better than "like" in the eleventh verse. There may be some difference of opinion regarding the use of the word "charity" in this chapter; but in view of the fact that many qualities of a deeply spiritual nature are attributed to the gift here dealt with, it seems not unnatural to use the less common word.

King James Version

Acts 18:9, 10: Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

Revised Standard Version

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city."

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

The Authorized rendering of these verses sounds like good, idiomatic English that needs no change.

King James Version

John 2:4: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

Revised Standard Version

And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

The "O" seems superfluous in this connection.

King James Version

Revelation 21:1-7: And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revised Standard Version

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I

The Prose of Our King James Version

King James Version

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Revised Standard Version

make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son."

The changes in this passage are not numerous, but for the most part they seem unfortunate. The insertion of the definite article before "Alpha" and "Omega" is an improvement. Aside from this correction, the sixth and seventh verses are best as given in the Authorized version.

King James Version

Revelation 22:5: And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Revised Standard Version

And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Verses 10-12: And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings

And he said unto me, "Do not seal up the words of the proph-

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament

King James Version

of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Verse 17: And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Note the vigor and strength of verse 10 in the Authorized version, and then the solemn, rhythmic movement of the eleventh verse, followed by the stern announcement of the twelfth. "Do not seal up" and "I am coming soon" seem weak in comparison with the forthright vigor of the Authorized renderings.

King James Version

Romans 7:18-23: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present

Revised Standard Version

ecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evil-doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done."

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

Revised Standard Version

For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For

The Prose of Our King James Version

King James Version

with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Romans 8:5-9: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Revised Standard Version

I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,

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King James Version

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Verses 28-32: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Romans 12:1, 2: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed

Revised Standard Version

if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world

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King James Version

to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Verses 9-13: Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Revised Standard Version

but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

Reading these passages from Romans aloud, one after the other, and comparing the different renderings, three impressions come to one. First, both renderings are perfectly intelligible. Second, the older one is the finer of the two, judged as literature. Third, the older rendering, while possibly coming short of being as literally correct as the later one, really gets at the heart of the matter, and conveys the central truth more forcibly than does the other. It achieves this effect partly because it is in the solemn style and partly because the thought is

clothed in language intrinsically more beautiful than the other.

It seems that this judgment would apply to all the passages given above as typical of the two versions and to a great many others that might be added.

The foregoing selections are believed to be representative; but Bible students who wish to do full justice to the new translation should of course read much larger portions of it, always remembering that the task undertaken by the translators being a very difficult one, even partial success is something of a triumph.

When we praise the excellence of the King James version we do not always call to mind the peculiarly favorable conditions under which it was produced. A brief survey of the history of English Bible translation in the century of its greatest activity may prove helpful at this juncture. The earliest edition of Tyndale's New Testament was published in 1525, Coverdale's complete English Bible in 1535, the Great Bible in 1539, the Genevan in 1560, the Bishops' Bible in 1568, the Rheims New Testament in 1582, and finally the Authorized version in 1611. All these translations were published within a period of less than ninety years.

If we take account of the different editions of the same version and of some versions of minor consequence, we see it was almost a continuous performance. In fact, some of the translators bore a part in the preparation of several versions. Tyndale gave us our basic version of the

New Testament, and his translation of considerable portions of the Old Testament entered into the make-up of the Matthew version, and later formed part of the Great (sometimes called the Cranmer) Bible. Coverdale not only translated the version that goes by his name but also worked on the Matthew Bible of 1537, was the leading editor of the Great Bible of 1539, and also lent a hand in the getting out of the Genevan version. The fact of this overlapping of the labors of the leading translators insured unity of aim and favored the development of a good degree of uniformity in style, for the excellencies of one version were in a natural and spontaneous way woven into the texture of the succeeding one.

The political, social, and religious developments of this century must also be taken into account. Simultaneously with the rendering of Scripture in the mother tongue the country was undergoing a widespread religious revival. The men who were working on these different versions of the Bible were leaders in a great reform movement, and were often in jeopardy of their lives. Tyndale, Rogers, and Cranmer, among the translators, perished at the stake, and others had narrow escapes, Coverdale being imprisoned for a time. These men entered fully into the spiritual experiences of those men of earlier times who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote the Bible in the first place. Thus they had more than a literary fitness for the work, which may

be said to have been bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. The Bible was something more to them than a book; it offered life to them and to the nation. Living as they did in the century of the Marian persecutions, the publication of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the Bible necessarily meant far more to them than it could mean to men living in any later century in the history of England. It stood for the birth of a nation, for national as well as religious freedom, for larger educational opportunities, and in some degree for the right to think for oneself.

The authors of the King James version enjoyed another important advantage in that they lived in the golden age of English literature. Richard Hooker's *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, that noble example of religious prose, was first published in 1594, and it had a strong influence on the development of the language. Bacon's *Essays* came out in 1597, and his *Advancement of Learning* in 1605. Some of the greatest works of Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists appeared in the closing years of the sixteenth and the opening years of the seventeenth century. The air was instinct with poetry; society men wrote sonnets where men of other times wrote letters of friendship, and literary topics were on every tongue. It was an ideal time for the finishing touches to be given to that truly national classic, the English Bible.

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The translations by Tyndale and Coverdale came out at an earlier period, when English idioms were not firmly fixed, and the language, still in the plastic stage, was the better adapted to a somewhat literal rendering of the Hebrew and Greek originals. Thus conditions were favorable for the preparation of the basic text which later on was to undergo some judicious elaboration. When the language had reached the height of its literary development, and had taken on its final beauty, then it was that the translators of the Authorized version, passing in review all the previous versions, used exquisite literary judgment and an almost infallible taste in culling the best renderings from the older versions and supplying here and there, when it seemed necessary, some felicitous renderings of their own. Not only did the authors of the King James version profit from living in an age when statesmen and scholars and society people vied with one another in their literary enthusiasm, but they were near enough to the translators that preceded them to enter sympathetically into their labors, and put the finishing touches to a great task rightly begun.

How different in many ways was the situation of the scholarly men who, a few years ago, entered upon the preparation of the Revised Standard version. They were distant from the authors of the King James version by more than three centuries, a period seven times as long as that which separated the Authorized from the Bishops'

version. We people of the mid-twentieth century live in a different world, and have a widely different outlook from that of three centuries ago. Scientific interests have largely replaced the literary enthusiasms of the Elizabethan period. Religion occupies a comparatively small place in the lives of men and women of today, and interest in theology as such is practically extinct, so far as the general public is concerned. Obviously the present age is not a favorable time for the overhauling and correction of an old religious classic such as the King James version. Men may have the best of intentions, they may earnestly desire to understand and enter into the spirit of another age; but they cannot do so to any great extent. They are necessarily creatures of their own age and environment.

The Authorized version has had more than three hundred years in which to strengthen and consolidate its hold upon the affections of the Bible-reading public; but this long period of time, which separates the revisers of today from the men who produced the Authorized version, and the people who soon took it to their hearts, makes it extremely difficult to ascertain the nature and extent of the revision that may be needful to make the Inspired Volume acceptable to the Bible reading people of today. Intelligibility on the one hand and literary beauty on the other must be carefully weighed in the balances, and if, despite conscientious effort on the part of scholars well qualified to do the work, the resulting

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volume comes materially short of perfection, there is no reason for surprise. The King James version itself was not a first effort; it was one of a series. Amos Niven Wilder, professor of New Testament interpretation in the Chicago Theological Seminary, has written a thoughtful review of the Revised Standard version. After pointing out some of the improvements in the new version, he adds the following paragraph:

"These considerations, however, are not conclusive. For one thing, we must be sure that we have a really superlative new version before we relinquish the old. Better the old with whatever limitations than a new one that fails to lay hold upon the deeper powers of the English tongue today. Just as it took the best part of a century of continuous retouching and revision to produce the Authorized Version, so it may be that the Revised Versions of 1881 and 1901 and the present revision, along with the many private translations of our time, are only the first phases in the production of a modern authorized version that will impose its excellence for centuries to come."^a

Other men qualified to judge in such matters will agree with Professor Wilder. The scholars who have given us the new revision deserve well of all Bible lovers. Their translation is not perfect; but it marks an advanced step in New Testament scholarship, and will earn for

^a "The Revised Standard Version: Pros and Cons." *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 178 (December, 1946), p. 138.

itself an honored place among important translations of the New Testament.

Looking to the future of Bible translation, publishers might do well to recognize the fact that there are at least two classes of Bible readers to reckon with. The first class want a Bible that is an accurate translation into idiomatic English of the best Greek text that modern scholarship can produce. Such a translation should include as many of the verbal felicities of the King James version as could be gracefully woven into the text without loss of accuracy in rendering the Greek original. Members of this class will be reasonably satisfied with the version that has just been published; but they will be delighted with a later edition of this New Testament in which the fine Greek scholarship of the present edition will be matched by an equally fine feeling for English prose rhythms.

The other class, a fairly large one, consists of men and women who think of the Bible as a great world book with a message, told variously in song and story and epistle, that makes its appeal to every human heart. The members of this class have a reverent regard for the Authorized version as a book that breathes the spirit of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, and others among the early Reformers. It comes down to us from a time when England was a nest of singing birds, and it has become not only a great religious classic but a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

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For this class of readers the King James version is not unacceptable in its present form, but they recognize that it has some faults. Here and there are a few words so much out of date that they call for the use of the dictionary. Such terms should be modernized. There are a few mistakes of translation and others arising from the use of defective manuscripts. The grammar is weak in places, and the punctuation needs careful revision. A new edition of the King James version free from these little defects, and retaining the solemn forms of verbs and pronouns, would entirely satisfy this second class of readers, and would make the Elizabethan masterpiece well-nigh perfect.

It ought perhaps to be said in passing that this large section of Bible lovers should not be thought of as utterly indifferent to errors of translation. Their attitude is rather that of men who know that, under the existing conditions, absolute accuracy is impossible, and who believe it is wholly unnecessary. The Bible has a human side and is essentially a human book containing a message that is more than human. Its real perfection lies in the fact that its message, given at various times and in various forms, centers finally in the revelation of God given through the life and teachings of "the man Christ Jesus." This message is successfully conveyed by the numerous translations of the Bible made by missionaries with various degrees of accuracy into many different languages, and as translated in all these different

languages it has shown the same more than human power of changing the hearts of men, savage and civilized, throughout the world.

Taking these facts into consideration, the class of Bible readers now under consideration firmly believe that the large fundamental truths of the Bible are set forth so often, so clearly, and in so many different ways in that Inspired Volume that a slight verbal inaccuracy here and there could be safely ignored.

It seems to many of these Bible lovers that the gospel message is also given effectively by the great hymns of the ages, which are sung weekly in all the churches of Christendom; it is given in those great world books, Augustine's *Confessions*, Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, Luther's lectures on *Romans* and *Galatians*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; and it is expounded successfully in the sermons of such gospel-filled men as John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Phillips Brooks, and G. Campbell Morgan.

The committee charged with the preparation of the version which is to meet the needs of the aforementioned readers, should include two or three men with a fair knowledge of Greek and Hebrew and at least as many men who have an expert knowledge of English prose rhythms, and are on familiar terms with the great English classics. The Bible put forth by this committee should have all the spiritual power and impressive beauty of the King James version,

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and should be free from its faults. It would in a short time take the place of the older version. Bible readers of the discriminating kind have been looking for such an edition of the King James version for a long time.

There are, however, conscientious men and women who insist on having a translation that is a meticulously accurate rendering of the best possible original text, based on the oldest manuscripts, and these will be pleased with the New Standard Revised version and its successor. Let us hope that those who insist on a letter-perfect Bible will realize that they may be in some danger of missing the informing spirit of the Inspired Volume, which is the true pearl of great price.

Appendix

Excerpt from *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, pp. 16-21 (Copyrighted, 1946, by the International Council of Religious Education, Chicago, and used by their permission).

"A second need for the revision lay in the fact that many words used in the King James Version had become obsolete or had changed their meaning. What modern reader would imagine that the 'carriages' which Paul took up on his trip to Jerusalem were in fact 'baggage' (Acts 21.15)? Or, when Paul beheld the 'devotions' of the Athenians, that it was 'the objects of your worship' (Acts 17.23)? He would hardly know that 'scrip' meant a 'wallet' or 'bag' (Mark 6.8) unless he consulted his dictionary. Certainly a schoolboy would be forgiven some perplexity if he should remember the date of the invention of the compass and then read in the description of Paul's sea voyage, 'We fetched a compass' (Acts 28.13). 'Made a circuit' is more intelligible even if it is not particularly nautical. He could probably guess the meaning of some words. When he read in Matthew 13.21 of the seed which did not have root that it 'dureth for a while' he might understand that as 'endureth.' Or when 1 Peter 3.11 said, 'Seek peace and ensue it,' he might think the word 'pursue' instead. But in other passages the reader would have an entirely false certainty. How could he know that the 'nephews' of certain widows in 1 Timothy 5.4 were in fact their 'grandchildren'? He would assume that Mark was perfectly clear in speaking of 'the coasts of Tyre and Sidon,' for these cities stood on the Mediterranean. But, as a matter of fact, the word was used as a synonym for 'borders' (Mark 7.24, 31.)

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"A great many words have changed their meaning in the last three hundred years. We still use the word 'let,' but that does not help us understand that 'he who now letteth' really means 'one that restraineth now' (2 Thess. 2.7). Unless a reader remembers his Latin he is likely to be misled by the words, 'We which . . . remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep' (1 Thess. 4.15). Since we use 'prevent' for 'hinder,' the revisers wisely substituted 'precede.' Many people have charged Jesus with giving impractical advice when he said, 'Take no thought for your life' (Matt. 6.25). They welcomed the revision which read, 'Be not anxious.' But that was exactly what the word 'thought' meant to our Elizabethan forefathers. We may speak of a 'charger,' but we think of a prancing horse rather than a 'platter' on which the head of John the Baptist might be laid (Mark 6.25). We may use the adjective 'lively,' but never when what we mean is 'living' (1 Peter 2.4-5). We may refer to a man's 'conversation,' but we never mean by that his 'conduct' (James 3.13); yet that is the way the word was used over and over again in the King James Version. No matter what kind of 'room' we eat in, we would never refer to higher and lower rooms at a dinner table (Luke 14.7-10). We know what an 'estate' is, but that does not help us to see how 'chief estates' could be invited to a birthday supper (Mark 6.21). The Revised Versions of 1881 and 1901 put all of these passages into words which we use today.

"It was in the use of prepositions that the King James Version was most misleading. The famous 'strain at a gnat' (Matthew 23.24) was simply a misprint for 'strain out a gnat,' but the misprint was not corrected. In some cases the reader might guess what the passage really means. He may recognize that 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness' means in fact 'by means of the mammon of unrighteousness' (Luke 16.9). When Jesus says, 'against the day of my burying hath she kept this,' the meaning is 'for the day' (John

12.7). Other cases are probably too absurd to be misleading. Pilate could not possibly have said about Jesus, 'Nothing worthy of death is done unto him' (Luke 23.15). It must mean 'done by him,' as the revisers made it. But the average reader was left totally in the dark when Paul was made to write, 'I know nothing by myself' (1 Cor. 4.4). The apostle certainly believed that he owed everything to Christ, but what he actually wrote here was, 'I know nothing against myself.' Among the significant points obscured by the King James use of prepositions was the distinction between source and mediation. In the prologue of John they said of the Word, 'All things were made by him' (1.3). The American revisers properly corrected it to 'through him.' The same change was made in 1 Corinthians 8:6 where Christ is called the mediator rather than the absolute source of creation.

"Actual mistranslations are numerous. Paul did not write to the Thessalonians, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil' (1 Thess. 5.22). He meant that they should keep from 'every form of evil.' When the publican was made to say in the parable of Jesus, 'I give tithes of all that I possess,' this ascribed to Jesus a misconception of the law of the tithe. It was not on property but on income. Hence the revisers properly wrote, 'All that I get' (Luke 18.12). In 1 Timothy 6.5 the subject was mistaken for the predicate. 'Supposing that gain is godliness' had to be corrected to 'supposing that godliness is a way of gain.' What Herod did with John the Baptist when he put him in prison was not to 'observe him' but 'keep him safe' (Mark 6.20).

"Some wrong translations were due to the influence of the Latin Vulgate. In Luke 23.33 the 1611 Bible kept the word 'Calvary,' which had been used since Tyndale for 'the place which is called The Skull.' The Latin word for skull was *calvaria*. There is no reason for its use in the English translation of a Greek book. The mistake in John 10:16 has a pertinent bearing on the question of Christian unity. The King James Version reads, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold

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. . . and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.' But in the Greek there are two different words, both of which are translated here 'fold,' as in the Vulgate. What the gospel says is that there are sheep who do not belong to this fold, but that all belong to one flock.

"For its own time the 1611 version did not contain many mistakes in English grammar. But our usage in the gender of pronouns has become entirely different. Any student who turned in a composition with such sentences as 'salt has lost his savour,' (Matthew 5.13), or 'my messenger . . . which shall prepare thy way' (Mark 1.2), would have his work blue-penciled rather severely. 'Cherubims' (Hebrews 9.5) is a false plural, for the Hebrew word 'cherubim' is itself the plural of cherub. When they wrote in Hebrews 5.8 'though he were a Son,' it was a false use of the subjunctive for any period of our language. Since there is nothing hypothetical involved, the revisers properly made it read 'though he was a Son.' Probably the most notorious grammatical slip was in the story of Peter's confession. They must have been thinking in Greek, where the subject of an infinitive is in the accusative case, when they wrote, 'Whom do men say that I am.' (Mark 8:27). Naturally the revisers restored it to English syntax with the nominative 'who.'

"The King James Version introduced many distinctions which have no basis in the original. In their famous preface, the translators affirmed that they did not feel bound to a single rendering for the same word. It is true that a translator must consider the differences of context, and give attention to the literary possibilities of the language in which he is writing. A Greek verb like *katargeo* must be rendered in English in a wide variety of ways, but when Paul deliberately used it three times in the same paragraph with the same meaning they were not justified in using three different expressions (1 Cor. 13.8-10). What was to be gained by calling the same Old Testament character by three different names, Jeremiah, Jeremias, and

Appendix

Jeremy? The result of this carelessness or freedom (whichever we prefer to call it) is that the King James Version gives an inaccurate picture of the underlying Greek text. For instance, in Acts 17.19 we are told that Paul was brought to the Areopagus. Then in 17.22 he stands 'in the midst of Mars' hill.' How is the reader to know that both translate the same Greek word and are really alternative possibilities as to its meaning? It was most unfortunate that in 1 Corinthians 13 and a few other places they forsook the Anglo-Saxon word 'love' for the Latin 'charity' as a translation for *agape*. Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Geneva Bible had all been uniform in their use of 'love.' If Paul used one and the same word, why should not we?

"In the Synoptic Gospels, where the parallels are so important, the King James Version does not give any indication of the literary dependence revealed by the Greek text. The following verses are identical in the original, but differ in translation.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matt. 26.41.

Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. Mark 14:38.

"In Matthew 25.46 the King James Version reads, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.' But why obscure the fact that 'everlasting' and 'eternal' are the same word in the Greek? Matthew 18.33 reads, 'Shouldest not thou also have compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?' Why should the same Greek word be 'compassion' in one half of the sentence and 'pity' in the other? The revisers chose 'mercy' in both cases. In Matthew 20.20 the King James Version reads, 'Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons.' Zebedee may have had daughters as well as sons, but the Greek word is 'son' in each case.

"On the other hand, the translators of the King James Version obliterated many distinctions which are in the Greek.

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They used 'hell' indiscriminately for 'Hades' (Matt. 11.23) and for 'Gehenna' (Matt. 5.22). One meant the abode of the dead; the other, a place of punishment. But how could the English reader know which Greek word stood in any individual passage? The revisers of 1881 were very careful at this point. Again, the King James Version used the word 'beast' both for the four 'living creatures' who stood round about the throne singing praises to God (Rev. 4.6) and for the diabolical monsters who were the opponents of God and his servants (Rev. 11.7; 13.1). In the original, entirely different words are used and the revisers made this clear. To mention one more point, the distinctions in Greek tenses were often not observed, even when it was important for the meaning.

"Two illustrations will suffice of the anachronisms which slipped into the King James Version. The resurrection of Jesus is central in the New Testament, but that does not mean that apostolic Christianity had a festival which they called 'Easter' (Acts 12.4). Our Easter may be close to the Jewish Passover, but that is hardly a justification for translating the latter word as 'Easter.' It seemed perfectly natural in Elizabethan England that a woman should light a 'candle' and sweep the house to find a lost coin (Luke 15:8). But in first-century Palestine it was a little 'lamp' which gave light to the room. The more exact knowledge of the revisers made possible these corrections."

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